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## Nexus, Winter 1978

Wright State University Community

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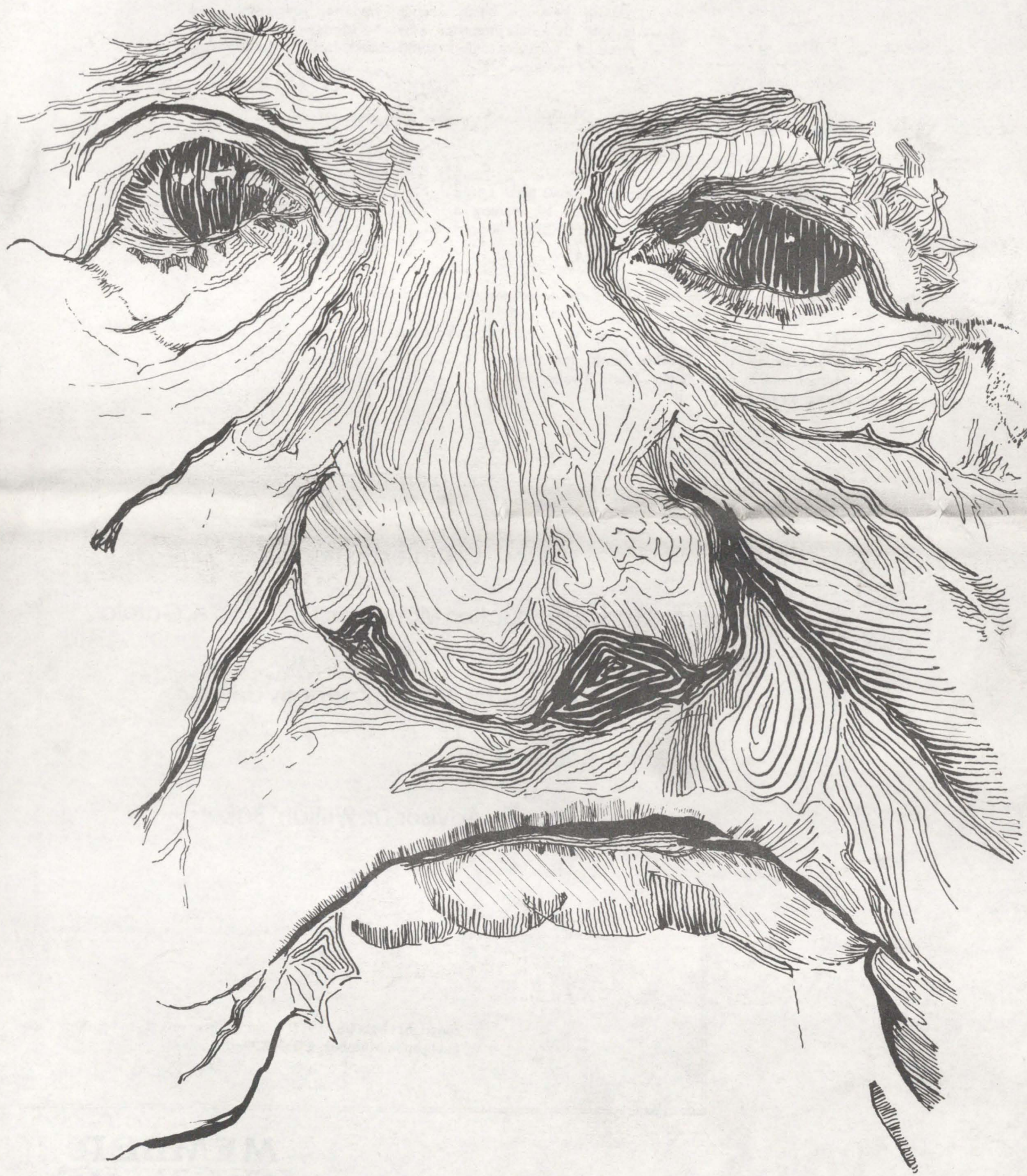
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# NEXUS





**nex.us** (nek'sas), n. [pl - uses, us], [L.] 1. a link or connection.  
2. a connected group or series

NEXUS is a student literary publication of Wright State University, started in 1965. It is published three times a year-Fall, Winter and Spring-and distributed free of charge. Write to: NEXUS, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio 45435.

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NEXUS is available to any little magazine or small press on an exchange basis. It may be obtained by mail by sending a self-addressed, stamped manila envelope to the NEXUS office.

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Editor Chitralekha Banerjee

Assistant Editor & Production Manager Eduardo A. Garcia

Assistant Editor Martha Kennedy Lindley

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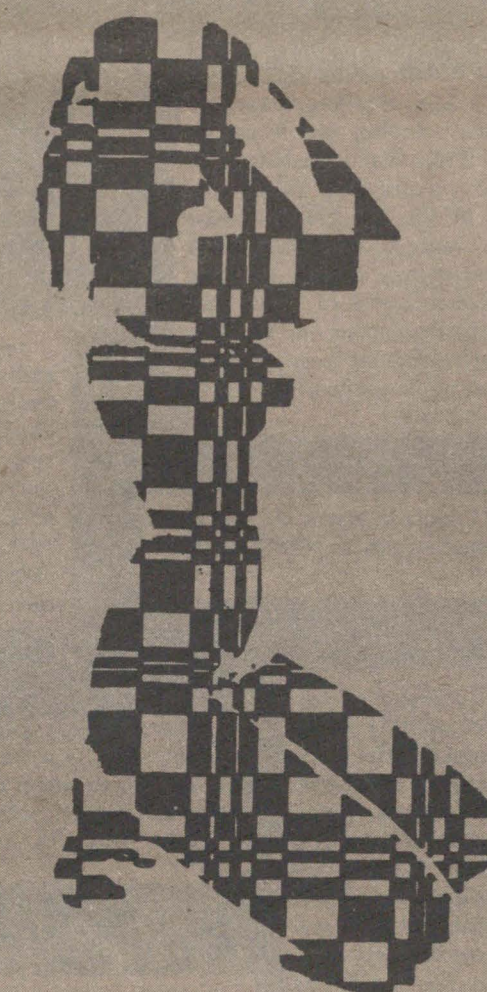
## Art Credits

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Kathleen Charnock	22
Dan Chittum	27
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John Whitford	12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 27
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Back & Front Covers by Ed Cyvas





# Silhouettes

The profiles have been composed by several people—the writers and artists themselves, their families or friends, and the NEXUS staff. We hope this page will be successful in making our writers more than merely disembodied names, in making them more human and accessible. We hope this page will bring our contributors and readers closer to each other in mutual sympathy and friendship. For that, after all, is what a literary magazine is all about.

Ruth Wildes Schuler lives in Novato, California. She has published poetry in various literary magazines, including NEXUS. Recently, she has edited an anthology, *Draconfire, Dancing Dogs and Dangling Dreams*.

Adam King, 25, is majoring in Art Education at WSU. Formerly a resident of Hawaii, he now lives in Yellow Springs. His main interests are painting and playing the piano. He enjoys a wide variety of music—"from Mingus to Boulez"—, is an admirer of Mondrian, keeps an aquarium and is an avid collector of potted plants. This is his first publication.

Dawne Dewey, Dana Metheny Carol Grant and Elanor Hassink have all taken creative writing classes at WSU.

Mike Smith writes, "I'm 25, a lover of creative writing, Sociology and overindulgence of any kind. I've worked five years full time as a Microforms librarian (currently at WSU). I dream of escaping to the South for a creative profession, perhaps basketweaving. My life's goal is to see Ohio become America's largest manmade lake."

Allen Maertz, 27, is a dark-haired and dark-eyed Hawaiian with many interests—painting, swimming, gourmet cooking and playing the piano. Currently majoring in Anthropology at WSU, Allen is also a professional tennis player.

Mike Gingrich is a Program Manager at Wright Pat and holds undergraduate and undergraduate degrees in physics. Photography has long been a major interest of his and much of his work reflects his scientific training. He regards his photography as a "developing art" where his interests have shifted from the technical to the artistic aspect. Much of his work is abstract and experimental. At the moment he is working on a "spectrum of Ohio architecture."

Edward B. Bynum professor/poet, lives in Cromwell, Connecticut.

Dana Strub is a student at WSU majoring in French and English.

Ed Cyvas, the designer of the cover pictures, is a Medical student at WSU.

John Whitford/Masculine Medusa/blinding blonde coiling curls/Walla Walla Washington to Boston/picture taker taking pictures of life life life/Nikkormat nicely nudged to capacity and beyond/energy endless like that old cosmic comet of '63/on and on through contrast and timeless space/twenty one year old eyes with an ageless mind for beauty/John Whitford.

Mary Gaitskill lives in Northville, Michigan, and has submitted stories to NEXUS previously.

Brad Schide, 22, joined Wright State in the Fall quarter. He is majoring in English. His main interest is writing; he likes working with serious themes, sometimes handling them in a humorous manner. His other major interest is reading. He enjoys "just about anything," but especially D. H. Lawrence and Flaubert. This is his first published story.

Barry Dempster is a Canadian writer who lives in Toronto. His work has been published in over a hundred magazines, including NEXUS. He is the Editor of *Tributaries*, and author of a forthcoming book of poems, *A Fable for Isolated Men*.

Jane Parenti is a recent graduate of WSU. She started as a Medical student and then switched to English. She works in a doctor's office, an experience that finds expression in much of her poetry. Jane's major interests are writing—both poetry and poetry criticism—and teaching creative writing. Her interest in reading is extensive—from Robert Lowell and Roethke to Ann Sexton and Sylvia Plath. She also reads a great many contemporary journals, "always looking for something new."

California-born Laura Grolla is a Communications major. She just moved to Ohio from Illinois, where she had been working with the handicapped—"and I'm already restless." Her main interests are Art, racketball and swimming. "but my most favorite thing is people—I really get into people." Laura is 18. This is her first publication.

NEXUS was unable to obtain the profiles of the other contributors.

## So Then It's Important

that you keep  
every scrap  
of correspondence  
your message to the milkman

"don't leave milk  
on steps today  
put in refrigerator"

(why did i think  
he would not  
understand exotic  
pronouns  
like

"it"  
tempting little articles  
like

"the"  
cajoling come-ons  
like

"please"?  
did i think he would  
squint scratch his head  
hold the message up to the light  
upside down  
move his lips  
in a vain attempt to put sound  
to the hieroglyphics  
scripting around  
the gerunds  
curly as  
a daisy-chain formed  
of mermaids  
minnesota rams  
and eels  
stick his tongue out  
so that they  
formed an island  
for the river that is his  
fat lips)

important  
that you keep  
souvenirs  
for the archives  
they will  
pay big money  
for nasty letter  
to Dayton Power & Light in twenty years  
or Poughkeepsie  
Poodle Groom  
the place that  
trimmed your dog's toenails  
so close to the quick  
that now he walks  
like a rhinoceros  
and stands in cold wet mud  
all day  
and won't even wear his rubbers  
or that new raincoat  
you bought him  
for christmas  
laid it under the tree  
with such care  
wrapped it in silver foil  
paper with clown-santas  
on it just like the one  
who winked at your back  
for the cameraman

by Kathleen Charnock

## D.D.S./O.T.

I despise plaque,

my dentist says.

He says it with such solemn, resonant ferocity,

sounding just like Charlton Heston's Lord God Jehovah

thus-saying:

I, your God

despise all adulteries...

That I smile a little through the cotton

half-expecting him to add:

VERILY I say unto you:

Each evening shalt thou floss!

by Bev Gustafson

## Where Is Your Ray Bradbury, Please?

At the library

in New Carlisle, Ohio,

in 1966,

a librarian who couldn't spell my name

glared at me through shellpink rhinestoned eyeglasses

as though she suspected I might have a social disease.

"Fantasy and science fiction,"

she said coldly,

"are in the JUVENILE Literature Room!"

The words made icicles on her nose

so I chipped one off

and stabbed her through the heart with it

and left her lying on the library rug

under toppled volumes of H. P. Lovecraft.

Later, I used that same icicle for a bookmark

in the Bradbury,

where it made a delicious chill in the Dandelion Wine

and finally melted,

leaving no stain.

by Bev Gustafson



# Untitled

for years  
i feared the white bird--  
glass-bound snow icon  
rozen in the scrub-  
grained oak closet,  
branch of the olive  
clasped in its beak,  
menacing over my  
grandmother's china.

she told me often  
in chipped, broken English  
how the great white bird  
had called her man  
away.  
and i imagined  
wings beating in the night,  
branches scratching at  
window panes,  
my grandmother's tears  
falling like olive oil,  
thickly trickling into  
dented, soot-blackened pots  
oozing up smells  
of incense and garlic.

frantic flapping  
light feathers  
shudders behind  
cold eye  
white dove;  
grandmother lights  
ve candle  
the shadowy niche  
a Byzantine past.  
the tongue of light  
eaps hungrily  
in search of polished tesserae,  
fine beaded-glass mosaics.  
the smoke stream curls and flickers,  
wafting thinner as it rises--  
musk and myrrh,  
straining to consecrate  
the haunted heights,  
groined-vault arches  
groaning in the wind  
the small light  
dying on the altar  
even as she turns  
and genuflects,  
moving into  
the shrouded darkness  
of spreading wings.

by Jane E. Parenti

## Ending

I wish  
you had burst  
into flame  
sooner  
shot the shards  
of burnt orange carpet  
from your dry ice fingertips  
steaming  
into triads of linoleum lakes  
Bermuda bays and waterfalls of stairs  
spattered your aura  
against the insides  
of another used engine  
for a recalled Corvair  
or later  
reassembled yourself  
into a birthday cake sparkler  
at Girves' Brown Derby  
(Cedar Hill and Fairmount Boulevard)  
and spun  
end over end  
into blackened night sky.

by G. Rainey

## THE SENTINEL

All the steps I've climbed  
to you have been like mountains.  
I've had to scale myself. Now:  
there are hills in your eyes, just  
beginning to grow. A slight breeze  
becomes a tide. Time triples.

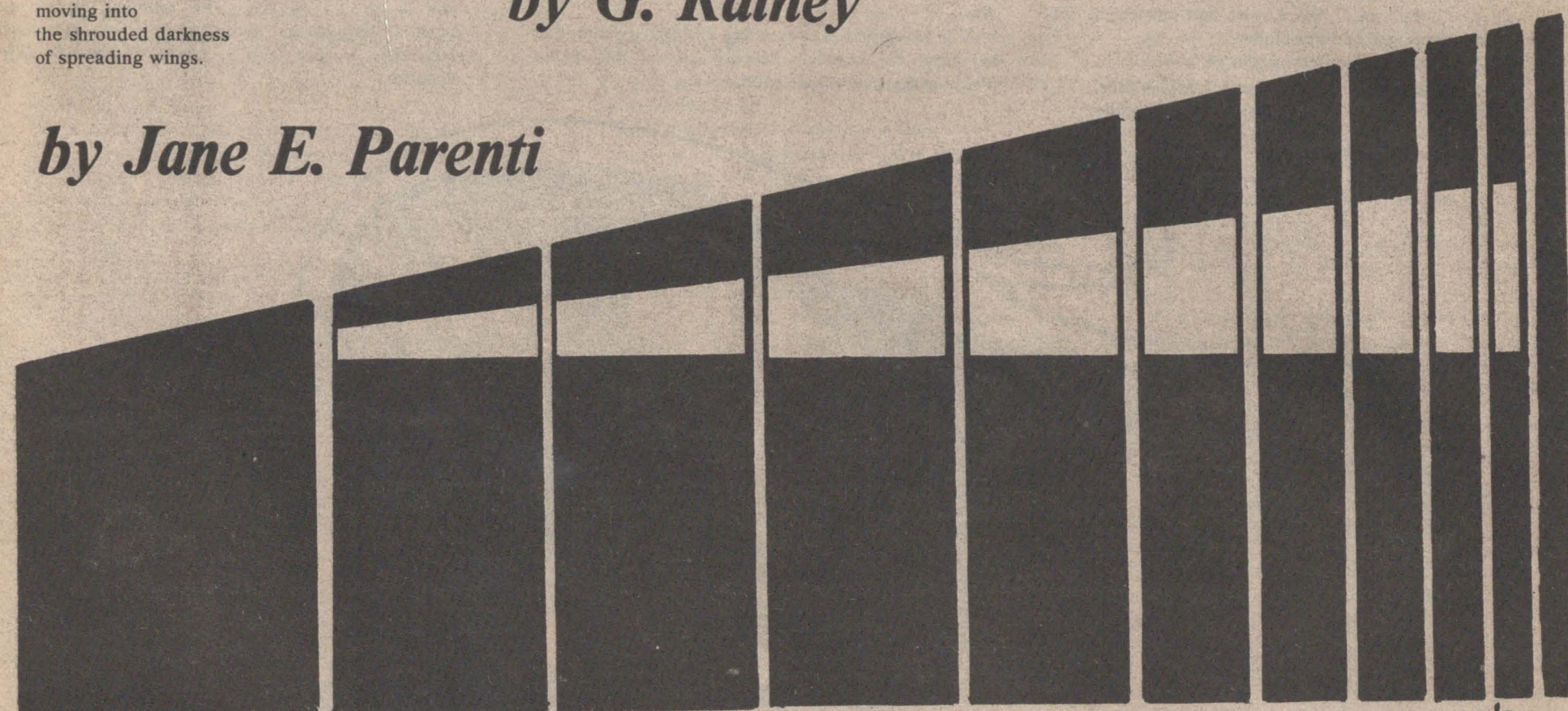
There's a head of innocence over  
your bed — a blue surface, as  
shivery as water, as tenuous. You  
and your boyfriends live in  
a tank-like world, no thought to  
breath, playing on fake ruins, bubbles

between you instead of words. Some-  
times I think my love a diversion, when  
you put one small damp hand in the desert  
of my hand, admiring the sound of  
my heart thumping through your fingers. The  
years have made me pagan, clustered

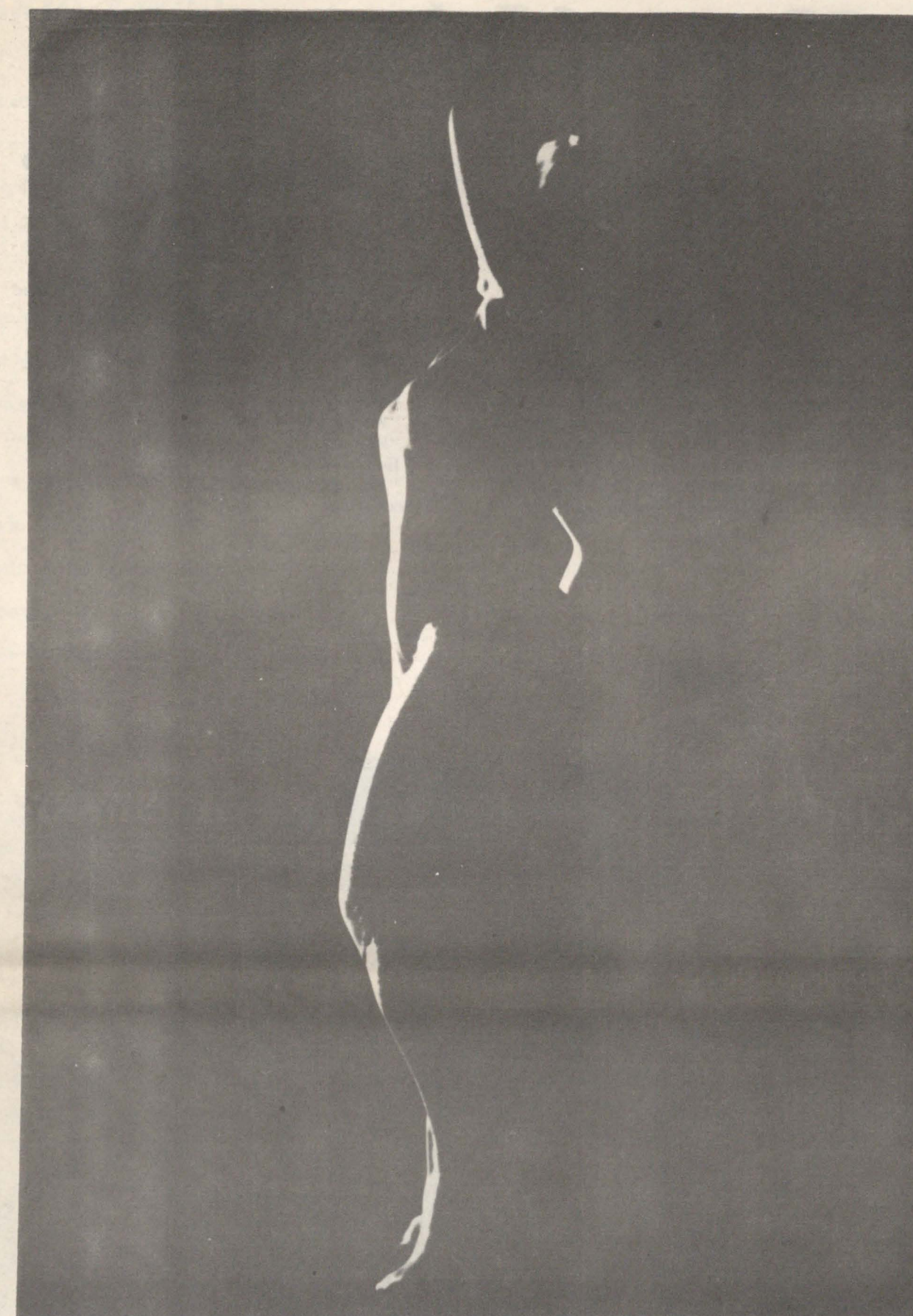
in my dreams like a disease.  
I wake up at night, you burning in the  
next room, my name like a piece of paper  
tucked in your soul; flames with my face coiled  
around you, smoke wrapping you in a cocoon.  
Tragedies are accidental. I have all

the right reasons for killing you. A memory:  
a tiny white-boned mannequin, fists  
tight as rocks, surviving. The plexiglass was  
broken, red rooms invaded by sun. Opaque  
wounds. A grown man tying a string to a baby  
boy, belly to belly, smearing all the windows with blood.

by Barry Dempster



Eduardo garcia



photograph by Bob Reck

## Dayspan

morning light  
vainly injects you with its energy  
one hand outflung  
to stop the alarm's strident complaint  
you are muzzled by the pillow  
by  
the curlers in your hair  
  
noon  
brings sadness; against the window  
the sun is a white glaze  
on glossy pages, lighting impartially  
you and liz taylor;  
you pare your toenails and yawn  
  
night drops suddenly  
purple nets entrapping  
stopperless perfume bottles, whisking away  
spilt power from dressertops  
spearheads spotlight  
the gleaming tips of your fingers  
curlers gone, you unfold  
an impatient orchid  
waiting to devour

## Untitled

Those women who never marry,  
usually stare cold through steamy windows.  
Their faces shredded from icy raindrops,  
lips pursed and unrelenting.  
They dream of plum-colored paradises,  
and righteous walks in the park.  
Waiting for him to climb down stairs.

by Susan Branscome

by Chitra Banerjee



# The Chicken-Hearted Injun

by Brad Schide

I had never seen a real Indian before, and I didn't care if I ever saw one after what Bobby Lukens told me. Bobby Lukens was my best friend. When I told him that I was going to Montana with my mother, the first thing he mentioned was the Indians.

"Indians! They don't run wild, do they?" I asked. "Yeah, but some of them stay on them reservations," Bobby replied.

"What's a reservation?"

"I don't rightly know. I guess it's like a jail."

"Jail? What did they do?"

"Killed and scalped some people, I guess."

"The calvary?"

"Well, they killed Custer, didn't they?"

I respected Bobby's opinions and views on things; he was a lot smarter than me. There wasn't too much he didn't know something about.

"They carry tomahawks around with them."

"Tomahawks! Do they scalp people?"

"Not unless you give them reason to."

I warned my mother about what Bobby had told me. I begged her to stay home.

"Don't be silly; they don't carry tomahawks. Who told you that?"

"I just heard, that's all."

"Grandma's been living there all these years and she has never been attacked."

***It was quiet and seemingly deserted; they could attack and we'd never know what hit us. Bobby said they always attacked when you least expected it.***

This made sense to me, so I told Bobby about it.

"But she's a woman. The don't attack women. They may be Indians, but they got some decency about them. Killing a woman is as low as shooting a guy in the back."

I tried to make my mother see the issue more clearly, but she only laughed. Unfortunately, I had to go with her because Dad was going on some retreat for two weeks: there would be nobody home to take care of me. So, I knew I had to wear my holster and gun.

My grandma was extremely fat and she moved very slowly. Besides that, she was awful old. I didn't see how she could ever defend herself.

"Haven't you ever been attacked yet, grandma?"

"Attacked?"

"By Indians."

"My heavens, no."

"You must be lucky then or something."

Grandma only laughed.

I kept my holster on the whole time we were there. I practiced my shooting out back everyday. I even bought an extra roll of caps and kept it in my gun belt just in case.

After church one Sunday, my Aunt Amanda took us for a ride in her new car. My aunt was a lanky, bony woman, who looked like she could barely walk, let alone drive. I wished her car had been bullet proof, especially since she was such a slow driver. It scared me to think that I was the only man in the car; I would be the one they would attack.

Grandma complained that she was getting tired of sitting, so we stopped at the next gas station. I thought it was a perfect set-up. It was quiet and seemingly deserted; they could attack and we'd never know what hit us. Bobby said they always attacked when you least expected it.

I got out of the car—my hand resting on my pistol of course—and stretched my legs. Aunt Amanda and mother began arguing about something. Then I heard my aunt say: "Ask the Indian over there if you don't believe me." A man was walking towards us. His hair was combed straight back and his clothes had oil stains all over them. He came towards us wiping his hands on a shop rag; the rag was now almost black. I would have drawn my gun on him, but I didn't see a tomahawk; I couldn't draw on an unarmed man. He wasn't even wearing feathers.

He turned and look down at me with a surprised look on his face. "Why, yes."

"Where's your tomahawk?"

"Tim! Get in the car this instant!"

"We don't carry tomahawks anymore."

"What do you use then, spears?"

"We don't fight anymore."

"How come?"

He was silent.

"Tim, get in the car," my mother gave him a meek smile.



"Can I help you folks?"

"How far is Mill Creek from here?" asked my mother.

"About seven miles from here. You should have taken the highway. It's a lot faster."

"See, I told you; grandma would get too tired," my aunt said.

I walked behind him as he was talking—there was no tomahawk on him. "Are you an Indian?" I finally asked.

He rubbed his hand lightly through my hair and walked back towards the station.

Mother grabbed me by the arm and sat me in the car. I watched him as we pulled away. He was leaning against the doorway smoking a cigarette—he seemed to be staring right at me. I didn't understand him at first, but then I figured he was just some chicken-hearted Indian.

## Skin Deep

My cat, in seeming somnolence,

Sprawls by the fire's glow,

In cynic civilized pretence

Of tameness, worn for show.

When night slides in, he drops disguise

And lets his wildness show;

With tail a-twitch and narrowed eyes,

He faces winter's blow.

For he intends to stalk the mice;

Poor things! they do not know

Their traitorous tracks, sharp-edged in ice,

Are arrow-black in snow.

by Eleanor Hassink



photograph by Bob Reck

## Ghost Plant

The Ghost plant

in the

hanging basket

ascades

a jumble of

silvery-blue

rosettes

drawn to

the east window

to worship

the sun.

by Carol Grant



# Hvitserk's Saga For Ivar

## by Dana Metheny

It has been told that a man's life will rush past him in the moments before his death. I know that those words are wise. Many nights ago, lying on the ground and staring at the stars above me, I looked back upon the years gone by.

But why my death? I was eager for the fray! The thoughts of glorious days filled with fighting made my blood boil! In truth, all the men were impatient, and all our talk about wars and raids warmed us well during many dark cold nights. But we did not have to wait long. The eve of the battle came quick and found all the warriors gathered together in the mead halls to resharpen weapons, to drink and to celebrate the coming of battle. I laughed along with them all. I wrestled and won, and boasted of a wench I had taken fancy to in the town. I had everything to live for and never gave it a second thought that I could be dead after the very next day! My life was still young, nineteen summers only, and I felt sure the fates had planned many full years of life for me yet!

But now my sword lies unsteady and unsure in my right hand even though I always wielded it in my left! It hides the fact that my arm is not there anymore.

Here I lie on my own brother's dragon ship with seven other dead men around me. My friends they are now, laid out as befits warriors from the Northlands. We all wait for the same thing: the Flames. We watch Valhalla for a glimpse of the Gods and we watch Midgard, the land of men where we once belonged. Caught in the middle, we are not accepted into either realm. We merely wait and contemplate our deaths. Oh fickle Odin! Father of the Gods, Gallows-master! We are dead men! Dead and lifeless! Lifeless? O, what a strange sensation! I fear that I am not yet used to the idea...

I remember fighting bravely in the battle. The enemy glittered brightly with weapon and sweat as they strained forward to meet our charge. My sword met my foe's weapon with such a great clatter and crash that the air vibrated over our blades! The battle was begun!

I began to chant and my wound blade joined the song in perfect pitch. O, by the Gods! We did love to fight in battle's charge! My well aimed blade cut through leather and bit the living flesh underneath to quench its dire thirst with blood. My sword and I chanted to Odin and sang death poems to our vanquished foes. Every inch of my body moved with the perfection and easy rhythm I had spent my entire childhood learning. I was a great serpent eating all who dared get in my way. I charged again and again, lusting after my prey, while desire and ecstasy flooded my senses! My battle cry rang victorious and clear and strong and far above the tumultuous sound of weapons until it faltered. Once, Astonished, I froze. An iron blade rose high into the air, crashed upon my helm and knocked me hard into the blood-red, thickened mud! I stood up and wheeled around frantically in search of my fallen sword and shield, but yet again I was brutally felled! By Odin! What was happening? Was my day to end with my defeat?

"By my red beard, nay!" I yelled as I gathered myself to stand again. But before I could rise and to my ultimate horror I found myself staring wide-eyed at an evil stranger standing over me. His figure was dark against the evening crimson. His hungry sword, long and lean, hung directly over my chest. Panic stricken, I tried to scramble away but my effort only made the eager tooth jump closer.

The enemy's face was masked in evening shadows yet I could follow his gaze, not along his own weapon to my pounding heart, but to my abandoned shield, some three paces off. He was looking at the raven

I had carved into the wood! No fighter could mistake my shield's raven creature as anything but my famed warrior-father's standard. For sure he knew I would be of more worth to him alive!

My father's name is whispered with fear all through the NorthCountry and in Ireland and England, too. His riches have been hoarded from great raids of which many praising skalds sing. I was the last male child sprung from his loins and he valued me greatly. Verily I tell that he would have paid high ransom for me, his youngest son.

I eyed the two sharp edges of the frankish blade hopefully but in vain for they suddenly came to life! The sword jumped down to cut clear through my body and into the earth below, anchoring itself firmly and deeply into the ground! My body arched with ultimate pain! My heaving chest slid up the weapon and met the hilt. The sword pulled free from the ground and made me collapse in a wretched heap upon my side. Satisfied, the enemy smiled as he retrieved his sword from out of my body and slid it back into its scabbard-nest.

I was dragged to my adversary's camp where he personally stripped me of my helmand dagger, my gold and silver armbands and my gold amulet. After he took all I owned except my clothing, he left me alone to bleed. I watched as more Norse warriors were brought in as captives, more dead than alive.

The battle din was a comfort to me as I sat alone. The sword-song was something familiar amidst the foreign camp and I listened carefully, trying to follow the movement of the fighting. The armies were moving farther away. I lay, bewildered and hurt, and as evening fell, the singing of swords died away. The silence was eerie. Uneasy, not having any link to my own army, my mind cried out for me to make a move for freedom. Perhaps it was folly or perhaps it was fey, the drunken-like death sickness, that made me leap up like a gelded colt and charge, unarmed, at the guard

### *My sword and I chanted to Odin and sang death poems to our vanquished foes.*

who stood nearby. I dived for his legs as he stood with his back to me. We fell heavily and scuffled about, each trying to regain our footing first. But he was armed. If I had known that he had a mace I would surely have changed my attack! I saw the spike rise into the air over our bodies like a snake's head over tall grass and then it fell like an eagle diving for food. My strongest arm flew up to meet it and flesh tore as the attacker bit into his prey. Bone smashed in the air and was driven to the ground as blood spurted in our faces! Some other captives swarmed into the fight before he could deliver another blow, but I could fight no more. In the midst of the ensuing upheaval I staggered away. My only thought was to get back to my own army's camp. I was verily weary so I let my numbed and heavy head bow down upon my chest and I fairly jumped as I saw an arrow buried there! Even as I stared at it another rooted itself deep in my chest right next to the first! Terrified, I took fast flight as a barrage of arrows thudded into my body. Dazed, I tripped and fell. The stars in the sky flew in wild circles with the grass. No one, friend or foe, came to see if I was alive or dead. I did not even care myself. I lay still for half the night.

When I awoke and first attempted to stand, something crusty on my arm stretched and then cracked open to release new pain. The strange warmth that bathed my arm alarmed my already worn senses. Did I not have somewhere to go? I walked as if asleep and yet I was awakened by another bloody nightmare. I saw my dangling swordarm covered with shining blood and I counted three or four arrowshafts protruding from my body. Death thoughts turned my eyes to ice. I ran, not fully sure as to where I was going, but desperately intent on getting there...

"Ivar!" I stumbled, but regained myself and ran again.

"Ivar!" My whole body seemed to scream with me, over and over, anguishing, calling that one name--my brother's name! The night brought my voice back to me as if in playful mockery and made me even sicker.

And then I saw the flames. Far below me little fires burned with the fuzzy edges which were made by the tears of a despairing, hurt man. An army camp! Or maybe Hell...I yelled, I screamed with all my faltering strength!

"Ivar! Iv-ar!!"  
The men were all moving down there.  
"Hvitserk?"

From far away the wind brought the sound of my name...My name! What! Is it...? By Odin, it is the camp! Victorious, I stepped forward but as I did the earth crumbled beneath my foot. I collapsed and catapulted down and down in a landslide that thrust the arrow shafts deeper into my body and then broke off the remaining ends! I lost consciousness in the midst of my fall and never knew when I hit the hill's bottom.

Evasive voices drifted in and out of my sleep. They mingled with my dreams and fled as I tried to grasp them. They sounded familiar. Gently, I was pulled from my sleep. The awakening was slow.

I opened my eyes and bolted in torment! No!! I was rolling, and tumbling down the hill, crying out for Ivar as the burning pain ate me alive! They held me down. They tried to calm me and I wanted to believe their reassuring words! Bjorn cursed and I worried about the reason. Nothing made sense to me. Bjorn? I knew him! Another of my many brothers, he was the first sight I saw as I stopped my pitching. Ivar was there too, holding a dark wet knife in his bloody hands. They looked at each other over my body and then turned to look at me. I felt the burning of their grave, staring eyes. My own eyes would not stay open for they had to strain too hard to see through an ocean of fog. I closed them and listened to far away voices.

"He has lost much blood, Bjorn."  
"Mayhap he will live--you see his stomach isn't cut!"  
"His arm! Look you at this!" Ivar hissed as he moved a flap of flesh. "Look how it be smashed here! The pieces are too many, I can do nought."

"Ivar! Here's our youngest brother. A strong warrior! Odin will take him sure..." The earnestness in Bjorn's voice made me want to cry out in despair.  
"His heart beats, the lungs breathe! Mark them well, do not give him up to Odin yet!"

Again I felt the heat of staring eyes.  
"Hvitserk. Hvitserk...boy, hear me now," It was Ivar. I opened my eyes and tried to answer but the voice that came out of me was like a stranger's, full of pain and short of breath. It couldn't have been my voice, but Ivar continued as if I had answered.

"I have nought for the pain. You are doing fine, you are sure to be fine. I have taken the arrows from your body. Rest."

I wondered then what "fine" meant. Would I be fine because I would live or because I would die? I wanted to live! Fine is such a meaningless word to an injured man.

I stared up at him through the strange white fog and saw my father there instead. Eager to talk to him I lifted up my head but when I blinked he was Ivar again.

My eyes roamed over the sky, picking out the sailing stars. They were tiny pinpoints shining through my dull senses. Treetops swayed to a gentle breeze; the moonlight cast a strange blue light upon the ground. Perhaps I was looking for someone, someone who was not there yet, but who would be soon. A great sigh shook me. I gave myself up to wait.

"Close your eyes, Hvitserk," I heard the voice say. "Close your eyes."

I obeyed, gladly, and watched in wonder as patterns of light played on the redness of my eyelids. The glow was like a distant yellow torch and as the patterns came closer, the glow grew bigger and bigger until the heat melted the designs into a great white glare. The brightness spread to engulf my whole face and head--harsh, threatening. It dripped down to my neck and chest, followed by a muddy blackness that drowned me as if to devour my whole body! What once had been soothing became a nightmare which I could not escape. I was deceived! Trying to pull away from oblivion I searched for Ivar, Bjorn, the commander, anyone to talk to! Finally Ivar called my name loudly and Bjorn slapped my face. My eyes were heavy and unwilling; my head rolled back, filled with deathly blackness.

"It is the arm, Bjorn, the sickness spreads."

Bjorn's eyes were sunk deep in their bony pits. He heaved a great sigh and when he spoke his voice was shaking.

"Will, will you be...cutting it off?"

"I'm not wanting...He has feeling in it yet." Ivar paused to look at my pained expression. "Bjorn, Hvitserk will never use his sword arm again. I am wanting for the rest of his body...I must keep the blackness here from spreading."

The grimness in my brother's voice meant nothing to me. I did not understand the meaning of their words then, for I was lost in shock and hideous dreams. Only my eyes were alive, blinking as I stared at the stars.

I think it was then that Ivar took up his knife and sank the blade into my arm. It cut deep and deeper still, through flesh and muscle, nerve and bloodways. My bone parted as the dagger made its path. Pain traveled a long way to reach awareness. It did not matter anymore, even when the nauseating stench of burning flesh overpowered my nostrils. Ivar had seared my stumped arm to keep my life juices inside me. The white heat of the searing iron was locked into my living muscle and I whimpered, quietly ashamed, for the newness of the first searing in my life was so strange. I was confused...

The gentle droning of a close voice made me stop. I fancied it was Odin's voice and to my weary pleasure when I opened my eyes the Gallows-Master was standing in front of me. I tried to show my courage, I had no thought of pleading for my life, but weakness strangled me and plunged me into darkness.

Bjorn had worked fast to keep all my blood from gushing out of the remainder of my arm. After it was seared, he rubbed it with sticky salve as Ivar readied a bandage, but his face was pale and his hands grew slow. Suddenly Bjorn reeled around and emptied his stomach onto the grass. He remained squatting there, his head between his bloodstained hands. Ivar finished tending me alone, his emotions turned to a cold stony countenance upon his face. Hespoketo mewith a hoarse voice.

"Hvitserk, you look most like our good mother. You are so fair of face. It is not good, this. You are too young, even with that new beard. I think you will die like your brother, Sigurd. I did hold both your lives in my hands..."

The gentle voice paused thoughtfully. Somehow, I sensed and shared my brother's loneliness.

"Will there ever be satisfaction? Ah nay...too many of battle's dead have made me wise. I fear my heart must remain tired, the ache unchanged: Death's thrall. And you are still a child yet."

The entire camp was asleep, I think, for the only sounds were those of animal origin. Ivar was alone; I was gone in a troubled sleep. He let his eyes close.

"Only for a minute," he whispered to me.

Only for a minute, just to rest his tired eyes. He promised to stay awake. He promised to watch over

me. He promised by Odin's beard! I know. I heard him.

The sunrise was dim. The stars were still out and I stared up and saw them twinkle and shine. I felt no pain, but a sudden, strange sensation made my throat tighten and my eyes sting way back in my head. The hard edges of the stars grew soft above my upturned face and I was suddenly aware of how cold the field was where I lay, unattended. Dull, leaden tears rolled down my cheeks and were caught in my first growth of beard. My commander's woman, Aethelstan, had given me the name of Hvitserk Fairhair because my beard was so handsome and soft to touch.

I thought of my mother and father, and I saw their faces smiling at me as when I was young. I remembered good times and growing up, the progression of my life. Progression to what? This my death? Aye, I felt it in the pit of my stomach. It rushed over me, turning my whole body feverish until I was covered with sweat. Where was Ivar? The Valkyries were singing! He verily did give me his word!

In one last effort, I called out for my missing brother and tried to rise against death's grasp. I managed only to roll onto my chest. The dewy wetness on the grass

and the soft singing of Odin's daughters, the collectors of the dead, gave me courage over my gut-felt fears. Looking forward to fighting and feasting in Valhalla, I closed my eyes to Midgard forever.

The sun rose higher into the sky. Ivar was startled into awakening. He cursed vehemently for sleeping and gazed anxiously towards my body. He was at my side in a moment, gently rolling me over and calling my name. He saw the still damp tracks of lonely tears across my dirty cheeks and dreadfully marked my pale features.

"The flesh burdens you no longer, my brother. For I fell asleep..."

Now here I wait for Ivar to cast the first firestick onto his own ship. We all wait to be sent on a long journey, all eight of us who died. One of my dead companions is singing a favorite tavern song. It is bawdy and joyous, loud and boisterous and makes the rest of us laugh. No doubt his singing sounds like the sea and the wailing wind to those who still live. It is eerie here with the dead. The daughter Valkyries wait above and I am ready. I have waited long for this moment of fire and flight. I reach up my hand. It is taken.



photograph by John Whitford



## Untitled

across a painted desert  
climbing the wind  
to his eyrie in the cliffs  
the eagle flies  
surveying  
the artistry of the sun  
in a flaming  
Indian paintbrush.

by Dawne E. Dewey



photograph by John Whitford

## Untitled

storm clouds  
speed across the sky  
from the southwest  
prairie grass  
flows over the land  
in a wave of wind  
waving goodbye  
to the afternoon sun  
rain smell  
urges the buffalo on  
prairie dogs dive  
into the earth  
as the hawk  
makes one last pass  
soaring home  
ahead of the storm.

by Dawne E. Dewey

## Late Autumn

November windows are bathed  
in light and shadow.  
Roots hold to frozen earth--  
as I walked in the sun  
my shadow stirred something.  
From summer weeds  
winterflowers grow  
the color of smoke.  
Cold is a silhouette  
growing clearly,  
making us fear for tasks  
not yet begun;  
now in the dark  
we shiver to despondence.  
A few dead leaves  
settle in the steps  
leading to the house.  
They are bones,  
their green flesh  
stripped by autumn.  
The first snow startled me,  
the sight of white blossoms  
sinking past the window.  
Bare trees are ignited  
in silver light,  
so evening comes  
as a tarnishing.  
The cold has not become tedious.  
Summer sits too closely.  
By February a chill invades  
to the very lining of our skins.  
But for now we breathe night stars.

by C. Ager



photograph by John Whitford

## Whidbey Island

An evening when light  
in its fading  
has its source in shades  
surrounding us:  
I found Renee's house  
glowing white  
in fields cut free  
of the sinuous skin  
weaving ocean trceries,  
currents of growth  
around their lives.  
From her garden  
she gathered beans,  
heavy pods laced with threads.  
Bill and the baby  
were smelt fishing;  
the beaches could be seen  
from upstairs windows.  
Night slumped its heavy persuasion  
on soil warmed stubble,  
and they came to the house,  
sand on clothing, shedding darkness,  
but leaving the door open.  
Dead fish were placed on the table,  
scales sea wet, silvered  
by intoxicating night air  
that curled into the house.  
Dusk became a liquid flame  
on fish, on our eyes.

The road I took that night  
curved to the land's edge,  
unlit and empty, sworn to water.  
In dreaming I follow it,  
turning right or left,  
the culmination a few dead animals--  
lamps for island nights--  
arriving with ocean upon them.

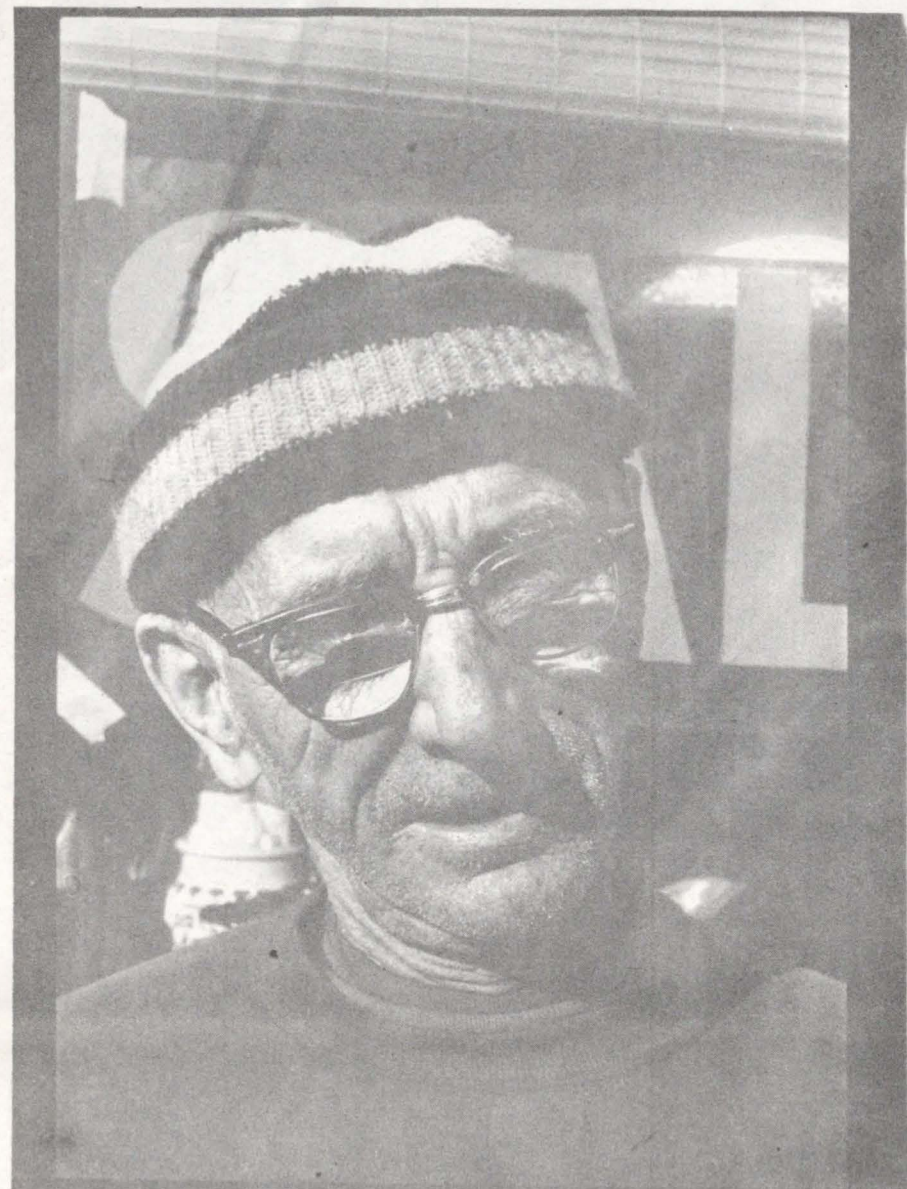
by C. Ager



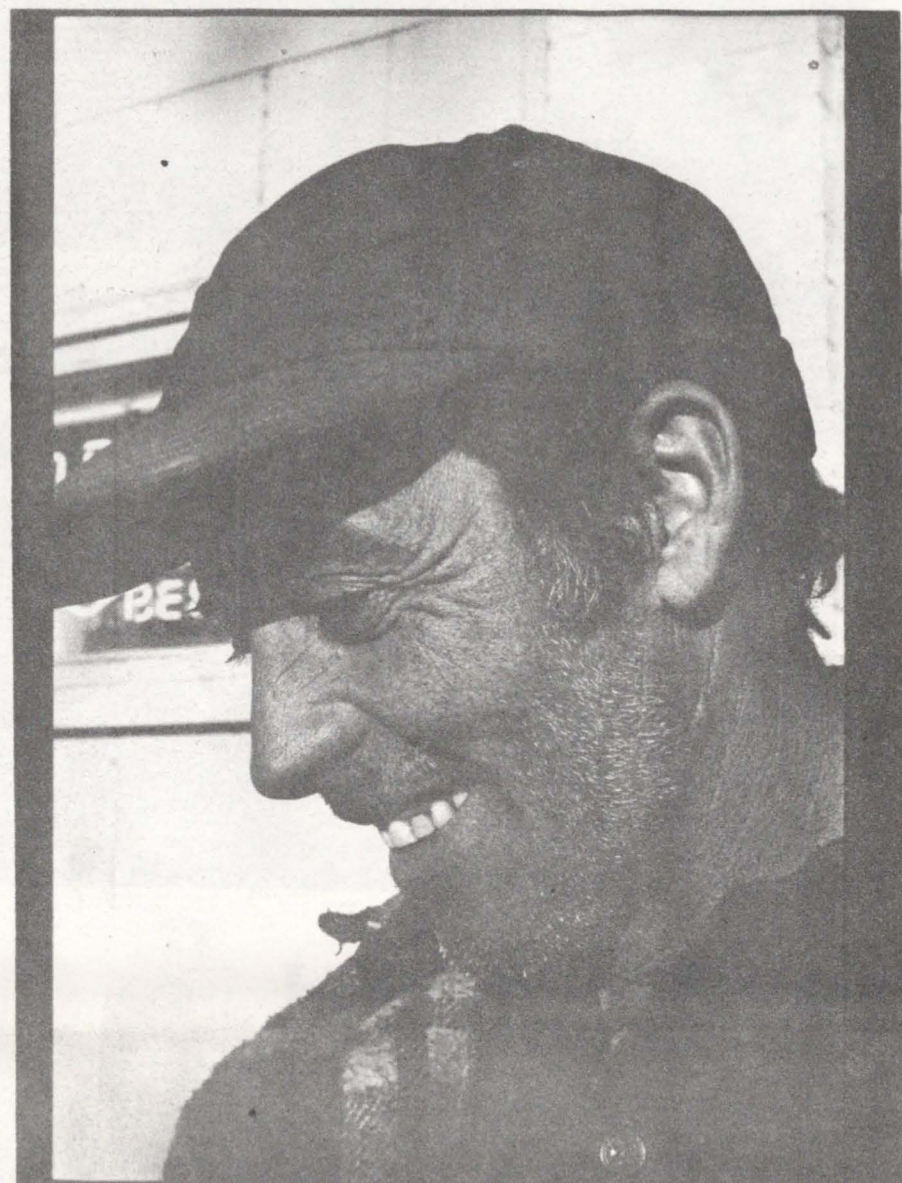
photograph by Bob Reck



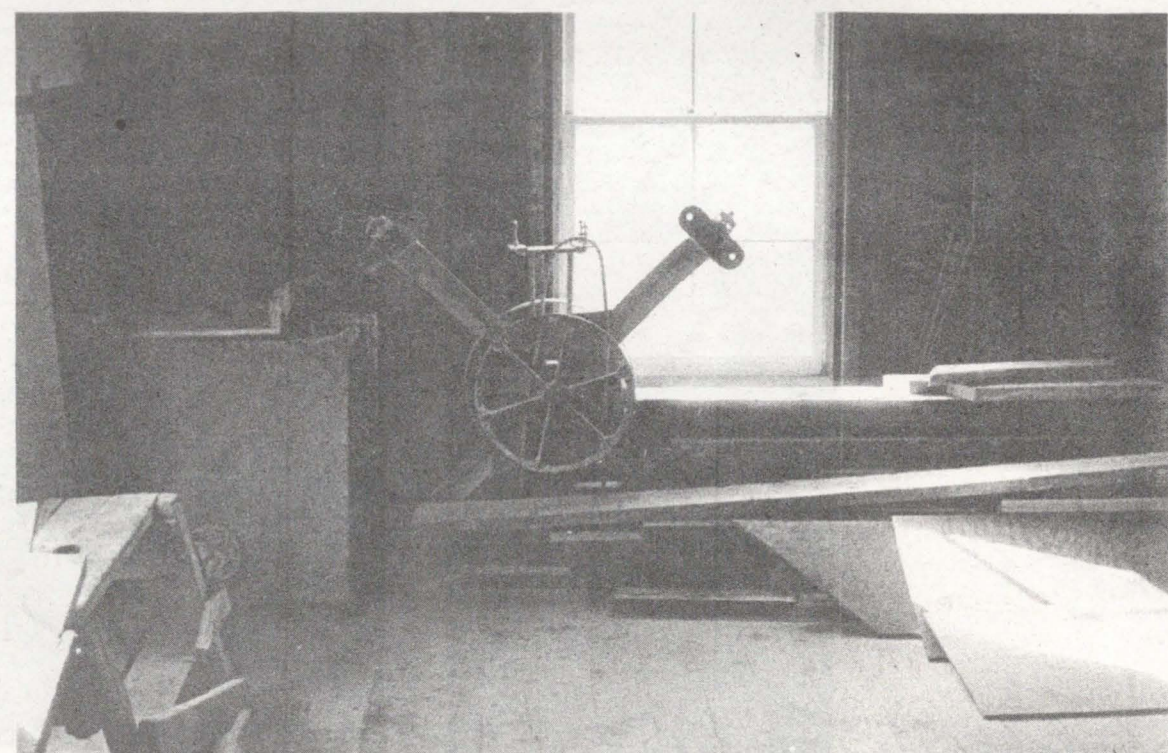
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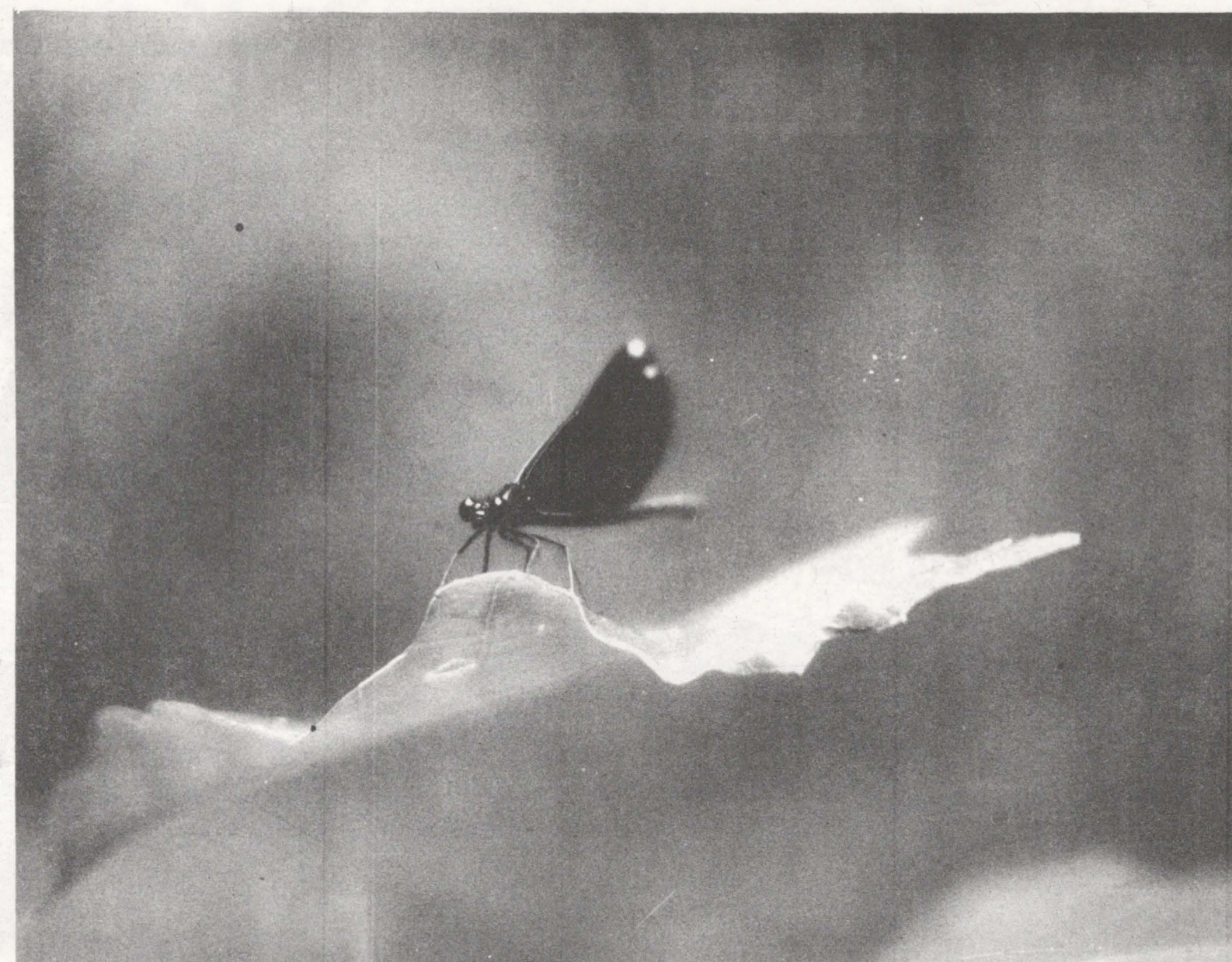
*photograph by John Whitford*



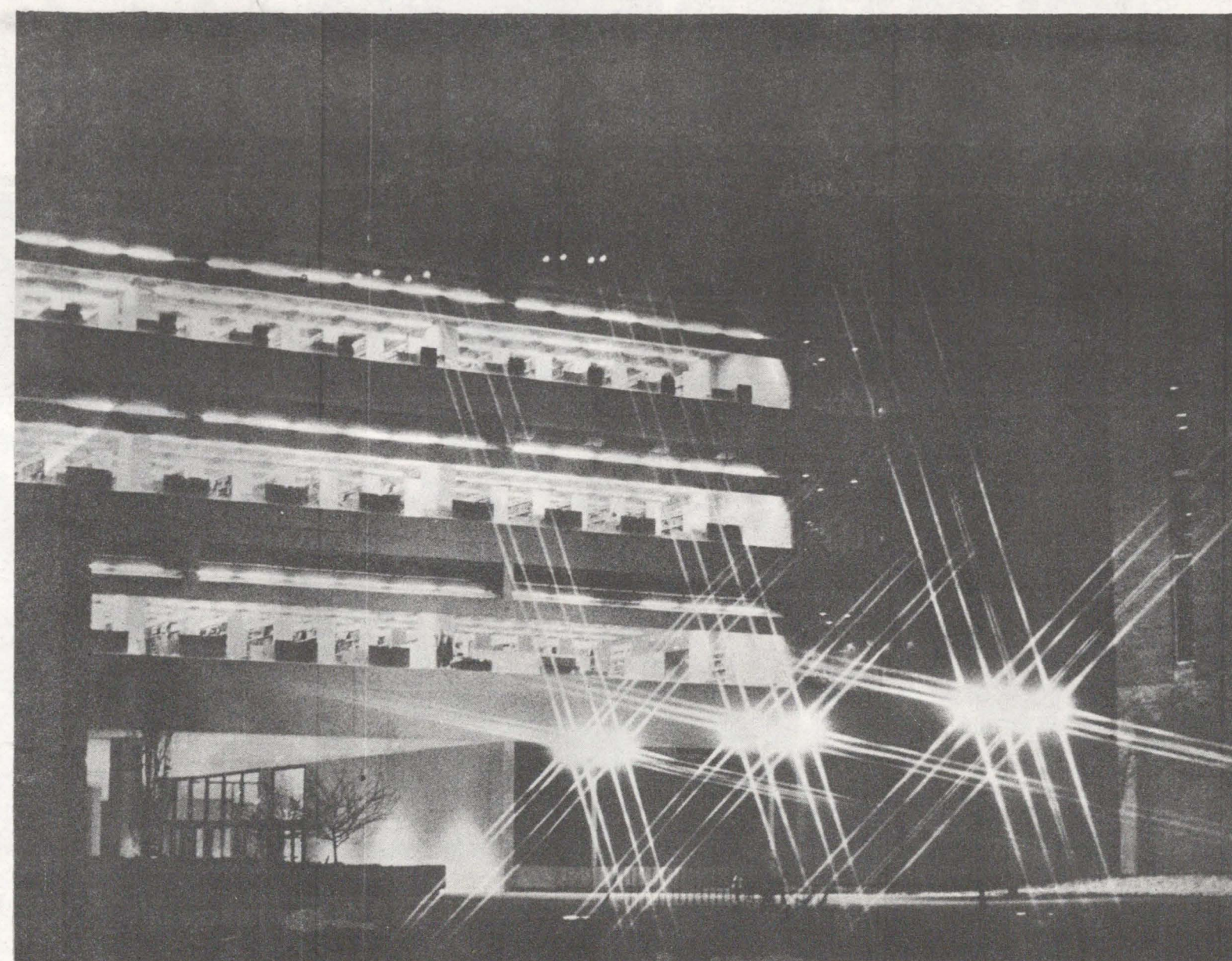
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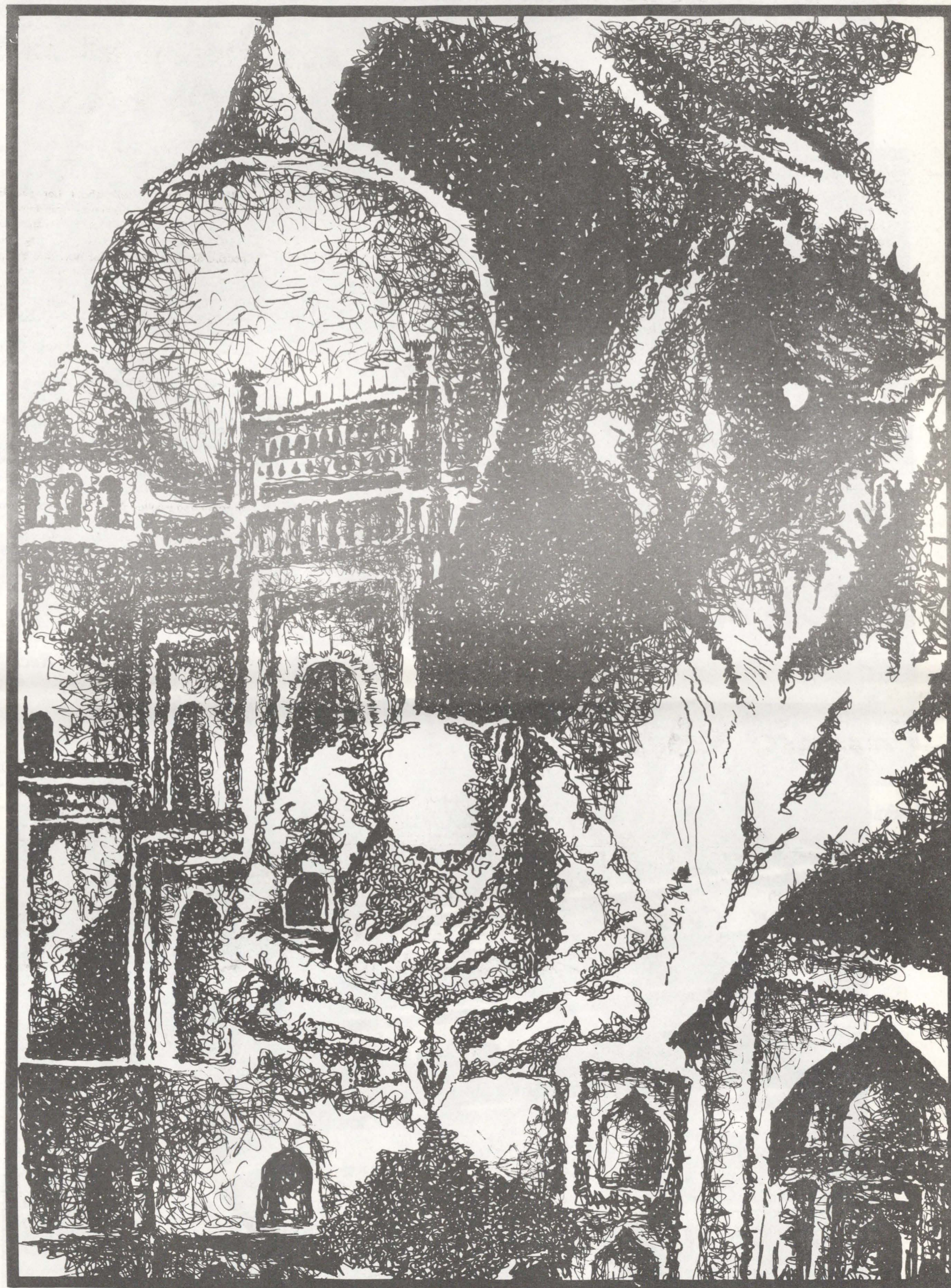


*photograph by Bob Reck*



*photograph by Bob Reck*





artwork by Ed Cyvas

## Excerpt: Mardi Gras Yellow

In Memory Of Barb Smith

by Mike Smith

*It. It!* It's Bourbon Street. It's a kaleidoscope of orange and red and purple neon calling you to "Come, drink up." It's streetlights, city lights, hold onto your friends, your wallet, your drink you think is almost gone. It's the single largest celebration on the planet earth, where streets are filled with people, not cars. It's the thunder of revelry which deafens the ears of the moon. It's vibrating jazz bands marching for decades under gilded iron balconies. It's the collective unconscious of the twentieth century screaming "let's shake the earth before we die." It's legalized deviance where, for a short time, you can reach into your id and wave your most bizarre fantasies under the nose of the world. It's the streets of New Orleans, where you dance with an eighty year old lady until she wears you out. It's the marriage of poverty to wealth; young to old; normal to bizarre. It's the melting pot of hookers, businessmen, freaks, jet setters, tramps, Jesus freaks and moonies throwing their ideologies into the wind like confetti. It's the galloping consumers of leisure coming to smell fresh oysters in oceans of beer. It's the superflight from reality where you can breathe free of timeclocks and rat races. It's the French Quarter of New Orleans where collected frustrations from every part of the globe gather to explode. It's chiffon laden belly dancers racing through the crowds to the clicking of their castanets, belting those brave drunks who dare pinch their vibrant asses. It is millions of smiling faces in a burst of luminescence: dancing, singing, laughing because it, *it*, is the season of the Mardi Gras.

I am not here to talk about...

by Rebecca Lloyd

Her eyes are the color of the yellowish-green part of a ripe avocado. But I am not here to talk about those sparkling orbs which are her claim to beauty.

I'm not here to talk about her swaying moods, where she sputters and spurts from happy hysteria to somber concentration in a matter of minutes.

I'm not here to talk about her large appetite for people or their appetite for her. She seems to know everyone and with each contact gives a part of herself.

What I am here to talk about is...her laugh. Cid has a great laugh. No, not a great laugh. It's better than that. It's hard to describe. It's not bubbly. Cid isn't the champagne type. She's more the double shots of Scotch type, but that doesn't tell you anything about her laugh. It's not an infectious laugh. Although it does impel you to join in, you resist so as not to miss this bizarre noise coming from her throat.

Actually it doesn't come directly from her throat. It bounces up like a pinball from somewhere deep inside her jeans, ricocheting past her unharnessed breasts and crazy smile to blow and bang against your eardrum with a heh, heh, heh. Her laugh lifts and pulls at the things within you that turn your day sour, tugging and cajoling those things within you that turn your day sweet to come out, come out wherever you are. You can't help but smile and be glad that she's there. Besides, she always has good dope.

## Tennis Shoes

by Rebecca Lloyd

I never went out with men who really wore tennis shoes. Until tonight. Never had any desire for tennis shoes although I often wondered at the strength in the thighs which were connected to the calves that joined the feet that rested in those tennis shoes. Vigorously vibratable, athletic thighs, thighs that need to be caressed and set into motion.

I didn't see the thighs of the man in the tennis shoes tonight. We went to a movie theatre where I did see the thighs of the men on the screen. They were celluloid thighs, nice enough but unreal. Not at all like the thighs sitting next to me. Real flesh, alive thighs. More popcorn? No thanks, just pass me your thigh. Plain or salted? Buttered, please.

Bluejeaned. His thighs were bluejeaned. His whole leg was bluejeaned right down to his tennis shoes which were not bluejeaned. They were white canvas. I guess his jeans were the reason I didn't see his thighs. He never took them off. He didn't take his tennis shoes off either. The only thing he actually did remove were his sunglasses and then only to see the movie.

But I'm not disappointed. The fantasy is still with me and the reality awaits. I'll see his thighs eventually, and when he finally takes his tennis shoes off, I'd like to try them on.





# Defense Of Territory

by Mary Gaitskill

Mr. Primm sat forward in the darkness of his bedroom, amid the dusty socks clinging to his orange armchair like fallen leaves. "Mystery Theater" wafted from the T.V. radio on the dresser like smoke, curling around lamps, hummel figures, jewelry boxes and pictures. It was turned down so that it was almost inaudible, in order for Mr. Primm to hear any noises from outside the house. He wiped his hands on his orlon pants and then rapidly skimmed the excess Vitalis off his hair, using one hand after the other. He rubbed his thumbs and forefingers together, felt his cavities with his tongue and listened, remaining far enough away from the open window so that no one would see him. He smiled to himself, adjusted his glasses, rubbed his loose chin, pulled the stuffing out of a hole in the chair and absently dropped it on the beige carpet. Perhaps, he thought, tonight would be fruitful.

He could see small, random imprints in the shallow feathers of snow covering the front yard, indicating that some fleet-footed person, a child no doubt, had run, with maddening indecision, here and there in Mr. Primm's yard. Mr. Primm imagined a thin, white-faced boy with green eyes like broken glass and the plump red mouth of a Christmas elf covering uneven teeth. Mr. Primm felt an unpleasant sensation as he pictured the unhealthy teeth of such a child breaking the soft, deceptive red of the puckered mouth.

The boy must've moved nose first until he found a vulnerable spot in the poor Primm house. He must've stood there for a moment playing with the rocks he probably held in his sticky, tenacious white fingers. His lips must've parted and pulled back like an animal revealing its teeth as he swung his arm and hurled the rocks full force against the Primm house, jarring its foundation and startling the family at dinner. And then he must've pattered away, gurgling in his throat, his sinuses overflowing with evil delight.

God! If only he could get his hands on the little bastard! He'd like to get his hands on all the sinewy ferrets that threw rocks at his house, his only house that wasn't even paid for yet, that was in bad enough shape as it was without anyone trying to beat it down with rock.

He rubbed his thumbs and forefingers together so violently that the flesh chafed. His jaws flexed and he could feel himself sweating angrily. His recently eaten dinner became heavy and oppressive to his stomach. This always happened when he thought of those spiteful brats, like perverse Peter Pans, just out of his fat, middle-aged reach. They ruined his dinner! His dinner that he'd worked to buy, that Jane had earnestly prepared, that he'd wanted to enjoy. They attacked his house, ruined his entire digestive system and left him to stare at their mindlessly random tracks like a chained dog.

"Dad?"

Mr. Primm turned and encountered the soft light of the hallway outside his bedroom. His son Tom had opened the door a crack and the light and noise from the rest of the house was tumbling in like a baby. Mr. Primm stood blinking for a moment.

"What are you doing, Dad?"

"I'm looking for turds. I can see the tracks of a turd and I'm hoping one will attack so I can get him," replied Mr. Primm. He curled his hands into fists.

Tom didn't say anything. He just stood in the hall for a moment, his glasses shining noncommittally. Then he went into the bathroom, leaving his father's

door open, exposing him to light and muted noises from the television downstairs. Tom was a good boy, thought Mr. Primm, a bright boy. But he didn't understand territory. He didn't understand fighting. He'd never get Tom out there chasing those little rock-throwing bastards, defending the house. Tom thought his father was crazy to even care about the rock throwers. He listened to Tom leave the bathroom and pad downstairs in his earth shoes.

Mrs. Primm watched her son with mascara-ringed blue eyes. She was sitting on a couch the color of manila paper in front of "Mary Tyler Moore." Her A & P blue tennis shoes were jumbled on the floor and her legs were curled tightly under her body. She held her feet as if to protect them. She anxiously peeled her thin, papery toenails as her eyes followed Tom down the stairs.

"What's he doing, Tom?"

"Freezing his butt off in front of an open window looking for some dumb kid he thinks is systematically stoning the house." Tom sat on the manila couch and slid down on the small of his back, splaying his long legs out like a fan.

His mother placed her small, plump hand on his thigh. He looked at her, touched by the lack of control she had over her facial expressions. Even the way she put on her make-up was as artlessly obvious as a teenager's.

*His lips must've parted and pulled back like an animal revealing its teeth as he swung his arm and hurled the rocks full force against the Primm house*

"What, mother?"

"How can he go on like this, Tom? It's become an obsession with him."

"I know. He looks like a mad monk in that dark, cold room."

"It's so crazy! A grown man worrying about some little prankster..."

Abruptly she stopped talking and looked around. She heard her husband on the stairway, bound for the bathroom, cursing under his breath. When he closed the bathroom door, she leaned anxiously towards her son, supporting herself on his brown corduroy thigh.

"Do you think he heard me?" she whispered, her soft, full eyebrows clustered with worry.

"No, you weren't speaking very loudly. It's all right."

They sat in silence through Fab and Revlon commercials until he had returned to his post.

"He's been like this for the past year. It's gotten worse and worse. I just don't know what to do, Tom. He's not the same man I married any more."

Her dark lower lip, moistened with strawberry glaze lipstick, trembled and dropped slightly, opening her mouth. Her blue eyes widened, and she looked at her son like a baffled kitten.

He took her hand from his leg and covered it with his own. He moved both their hands to her thigh and rubbed his thumb on the seam of her adolescently faded jeans. "Don't blame yourself, mother," he said. "It's not your fault."

"Thank you, Tom."

There was a flurry of thumps on the stairs and Mrs. Primm sat up sharply. Tom put his hands in his lap. They both watched Mr. Primm gallop down the stairs with his head bowed and his fists bouncing impotently on the ends of his wrists. He had his purple overcoat on and his eyes burned like lightbulbs.

"Where are you going, Dan?" Mrs. Primm stood up, her eyes distraught as those of the heroine of a commercial whose wash won't come clean.

"There's one of them out there...bastards." He opened the door and went out like a soldier, rubbing his thumbs and forefingers together in anticipation.

He had not actually seen anything, but he knew he'd heard the muted footsteps of a booted child. He flew off the porch and danced through the quiet snow to the side of the house where the attacks were always directed. He crouched like a detective in pursuit of jewel thieves and stared at the empty space where a boy with rocks should have been. He was sure he'd heard sounds.

He straightened slowly and stood there, feeling wetness invade his rubber overshoes. There weren't even any prints in the snow. Maybe he hadn't heard anything but a dog or branches in the wind. But then again, one could never be sure. Perhaps the attack had been directed at the other side of the house. Without great enthusiasm, Mr. Primm began walking around his house.

Inside, his son and his wife sat close together. Her face was frail with sadness, and his arm was around the fuzzy redness of her sweated shoulders.

"What worries me," said Mrs. Primm, "is that he might actually catch some kid out there. What would he do to him?" She bit into her lower lip, getting strawberry glaze on her teeth. "I'm even more concerned about him falling on the ice and breaking something. He's not in very good shape any more."

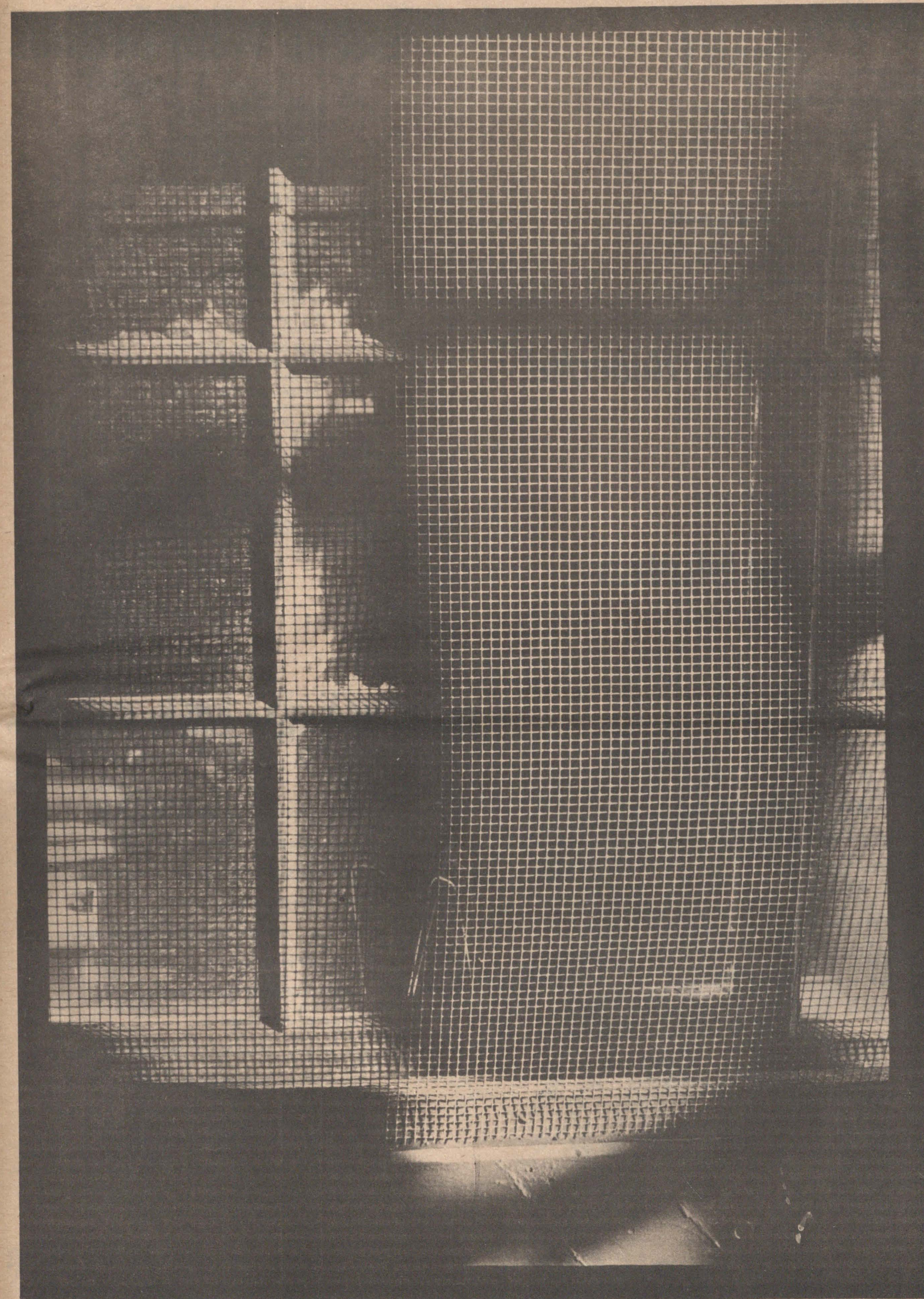
"Yeah, I know."

"It's not such a dangerous thing to go outside, it's why he's going outside, it's that he actually spends hours up there on the look-out for some kid who's thrown rocks at our house a few times."

"Mother."

Mrs. Primm turned to face her son and looked at him for a moment. His mouth pressed against her lips, spreading the artificial color out to her skin, and his hand went comfortingly around her slender neck, cradling it.

Outside, Mr. Primm stood in the snow. By now he had realized that there was no child outside the house. If there had been, he'd escaped long since. Still, he felt he should stand there, a protecting presence. After all, you could never tell when and from which direction another attack might come.



photograph by John Whitford



## Painting

they harbor gargoyles  
these forests that you see (dim stretches)  
beyond the powerblue windowpane  
that feels icy  
and the woman's face against it is a vivid yellow  
more yellow for being lighted up  
by the one candle  
guttered  
with smouldering fat over the left side;  
the background is quite unimpressive really  
with the cracked wooden chair pushed against the wall,  
the cushion rumpled on the floor;  
loose strands of hair escaping down her forehead,  
the woman is unremarkable, dumpy almost,  
only the set of her head (part turned  
towards the iceblue of the pane)  
tells us she, too, sees the gargoyles

by **Chitralkha Banerjee**

## Woodpond Sketch

I  
Stump guarded and wet  
the brackish shore diamonds with sand bits  
and mica, the bog water thickens  
  
like a blinded eye. Fever-fed days pulse  
and speed my sex and heart, cataract my will,  
stream out like dream and blood  
  
burst from an opened vein. O sun  
blast down the blue volley of sky  
my need confronts me like an element.

II  
Your face smooth as stone  
under these waters wells up pitching  
the current off in one direction.  
  
O thin and pure as rare ore the air  
swims above us curing itself;  
silence holds us in parenthesis.

by **Edward B. Bynum**

## Scene With Friends

Lauren, standing between  
strangers on the bank,  
shrugged inside her jacket.  
I was involved among roots  
whose earth the river tore away;  
bare, jocular, gregarious, brown,  
reared and plunged.

Harrell, flinging flat stones  
to poke across the skin  
of the wide water  
seemed to be reaching  
for the strange half-lives  
of their trajectories.  
Not one returned.

As if from there, the woods  
hallelujahed up around.  
We took no notice.  
But grey post fingers,  
curtains, raised and fanned  
out, spread like blown  
glass, a lung, the sky.

by **Adam King**

## De Kooning's Clam Diggers

On the silent beach, two sisters walked,  
Their ankles slipping through a mist of sand,  
Hair above their heads floating like sleepy goldfish.  
De Kooning saw them years later  
From miles away; the round, happy light that washed  
From their pink breasts fluttered drooped dreaming;  
He saw their giggles shift into the corner  
Of a shadow of a bashful wave.  
He tied their gestures up in his yellow laundry bag;  
It jounced and jittered in the deep trunk  
As he drove home across the rocky beach.  
Back in the studio his lips turned into brushes;  
He spoke and kissed the pumpkin green, rose candy, lucky man,  
The gull that stole their rouge to paint the sea.

by **Adam King**

## You See I Suffer From Delusions When I Smk Dp

scarlet-fingered velvetskin  
with wind  
chin float  
& then lock tight  
someone's rubbing my temples  
&  
very slowwwwlllllyyyyyyyyyy  
my mouth is  
sticky  
not dry  
but sticky  
fingers

by **Kathleen Charnock**

## Uh One And Uh Two

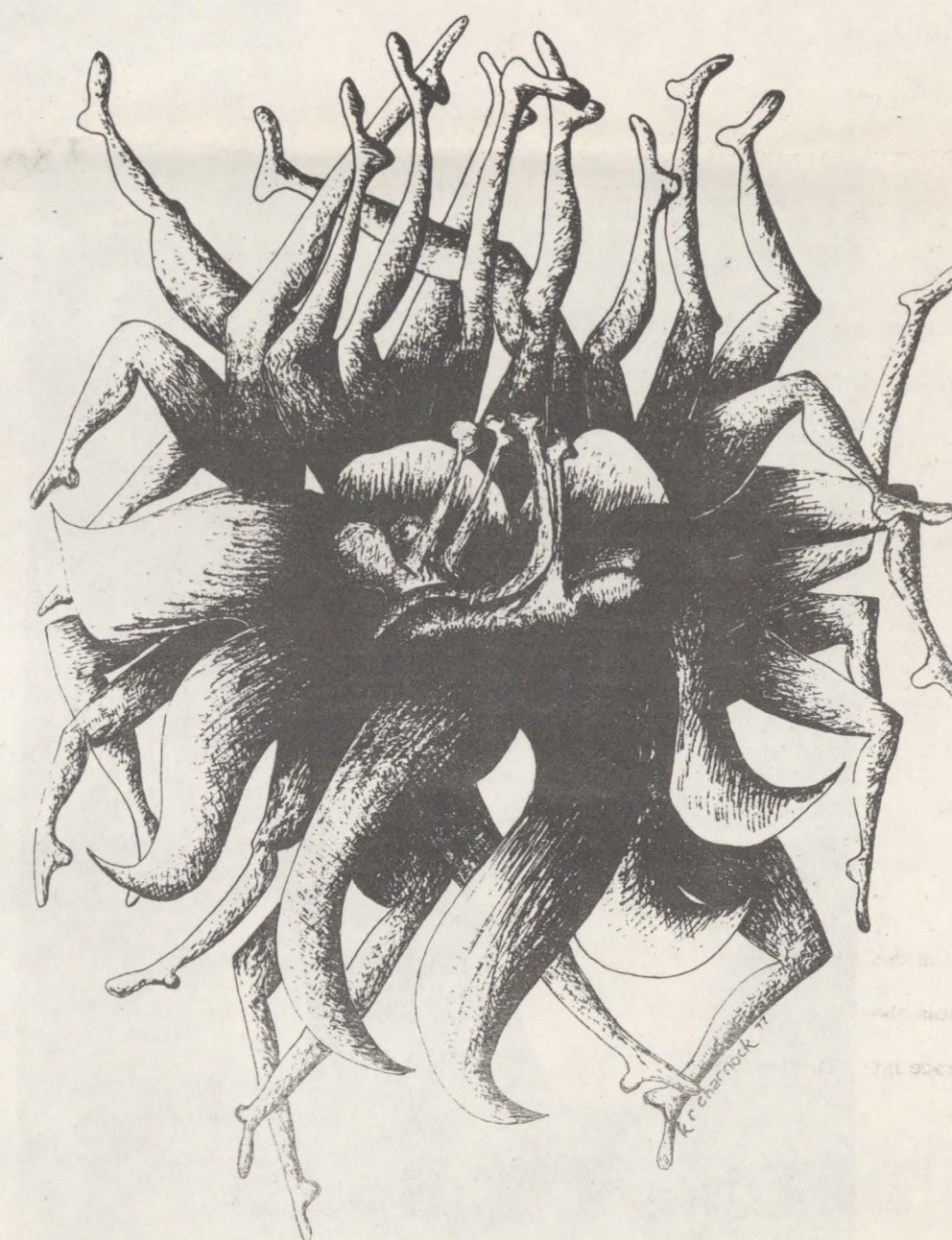
You don't seem to understand that  
if I were poised on the top of a  
fourteen story building & ready  
to jump----arms outstretched, fingers  
radiating from the palms like  
spokes of a wheel, chest expanded  
with more than its capacity of  
sulphur dioxide, thigh muscles  
taut as bowstrings tight  
as the truth, (elastic stretching  
from a pair of doorknobs spanning  
a conventional sized room)---and  
Dolly Parton were singing my requiem  
softly under her breath, her own  
chest matching mine breath for  
breath, the two of us synchronized,  
she waiting and ready, me poised  
and taut---that you would be the  
only one powerful enough to  
order a halt to her rehearsal  
of my ode, my tense brinkmanship.  
And you Lawrence Welk, you who  
are so heavily endowed  
with wealth and position  
and finesse, you stand  
in front of an invisible podium  
behind bubbles that wobble their  
uncertainties along vertical shafts  
of light, following  
with dogged but confused patience  
an ascendancy not unlike  
the Stairsteps of Heaven

by **Kathleen Charnock**

## Dinner

To alter  
the  
ritual  
of  
dining  
alone  
I commit  
myself  
to study  
the Aztec's  
use of  
hallucinogens.

by **Carol Grant**

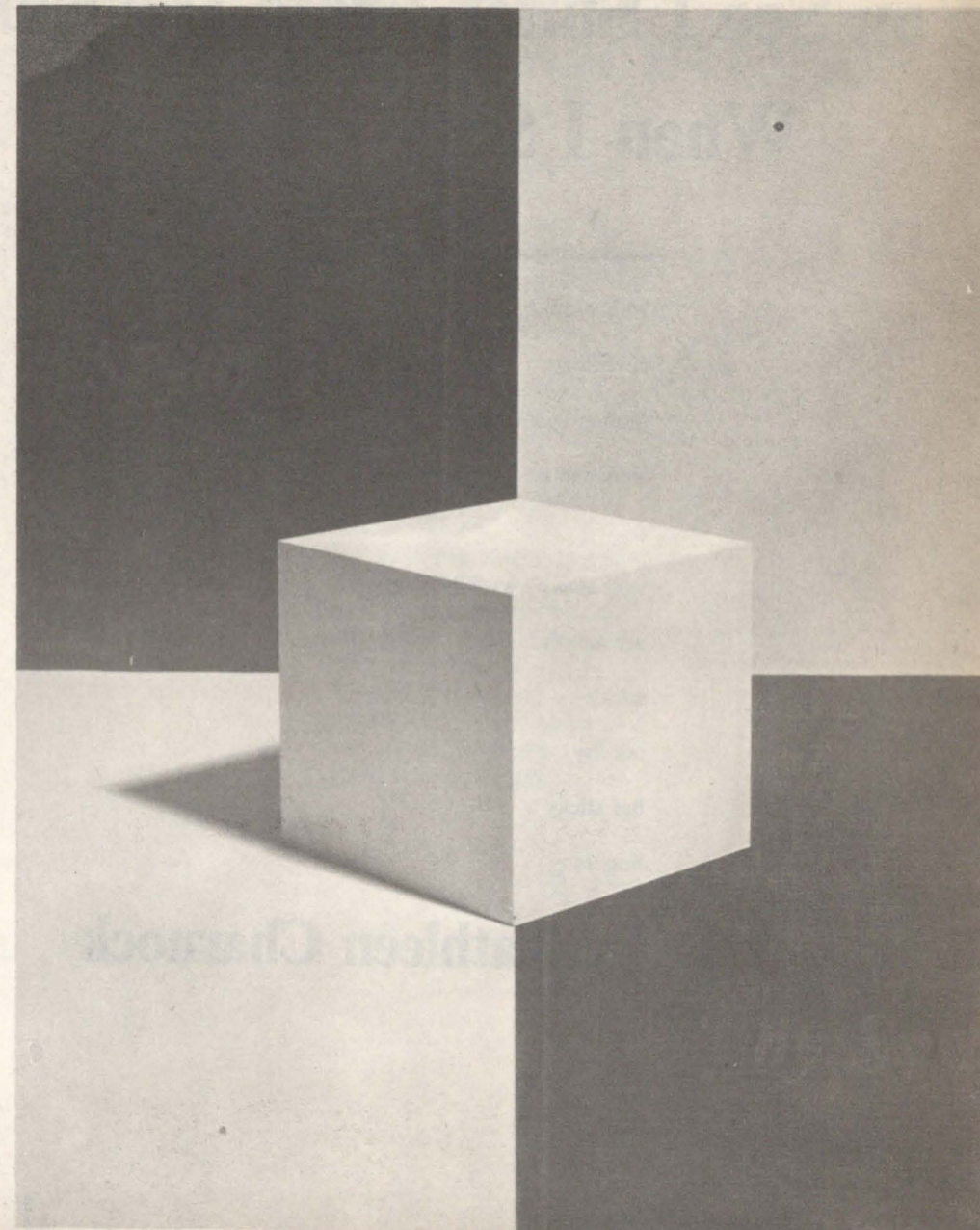




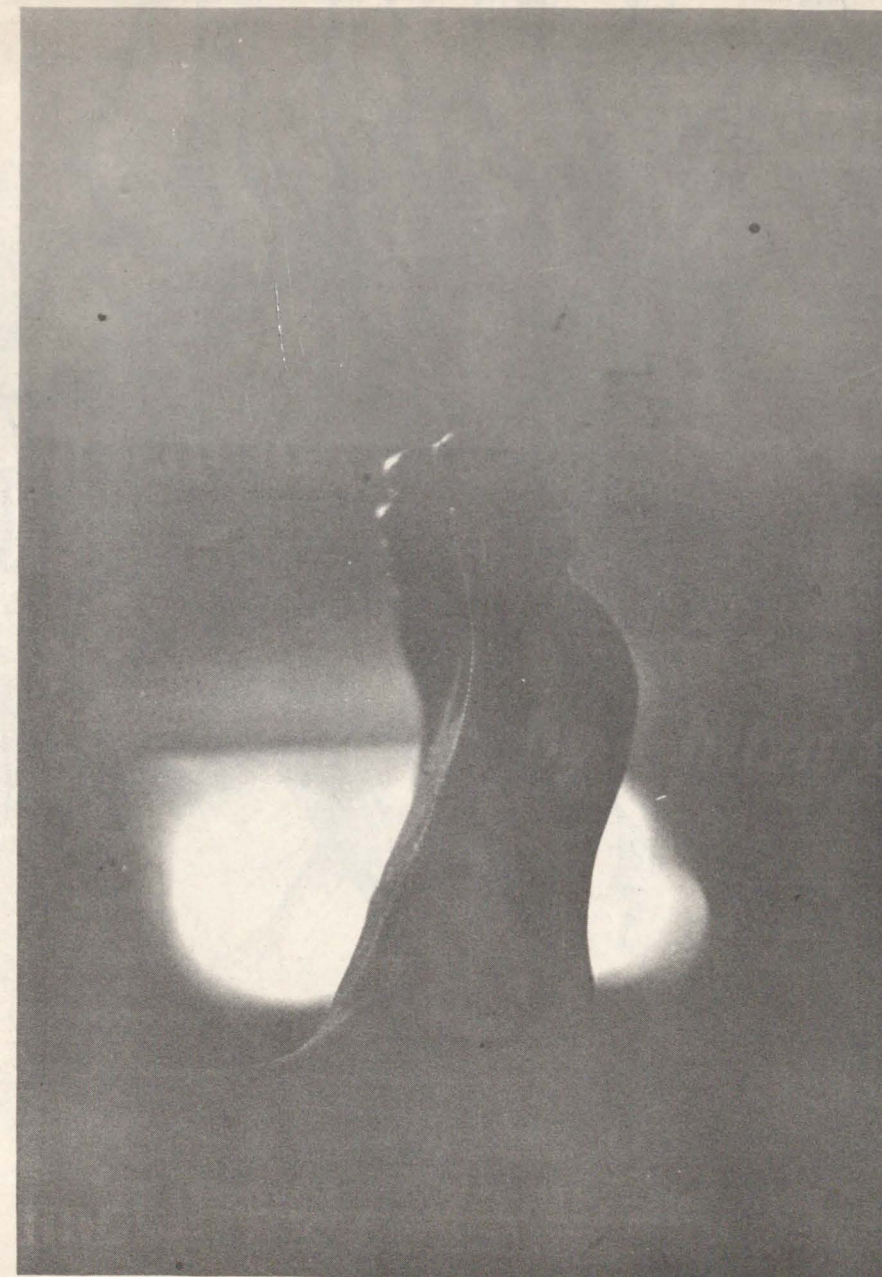
## Untitled

I love poems  
with no titles nor rhymes  
carbonated  
their bubbles reach through  
neon stars  
and rise past  
infinity  
they explode in  
strong minds  
and dive  
beyond intelligence  
symbolic of all that is  
unknown.

by Susan Branscome



photograph by Gingrich



photograph by Allen Maertz

## poem for r.s.

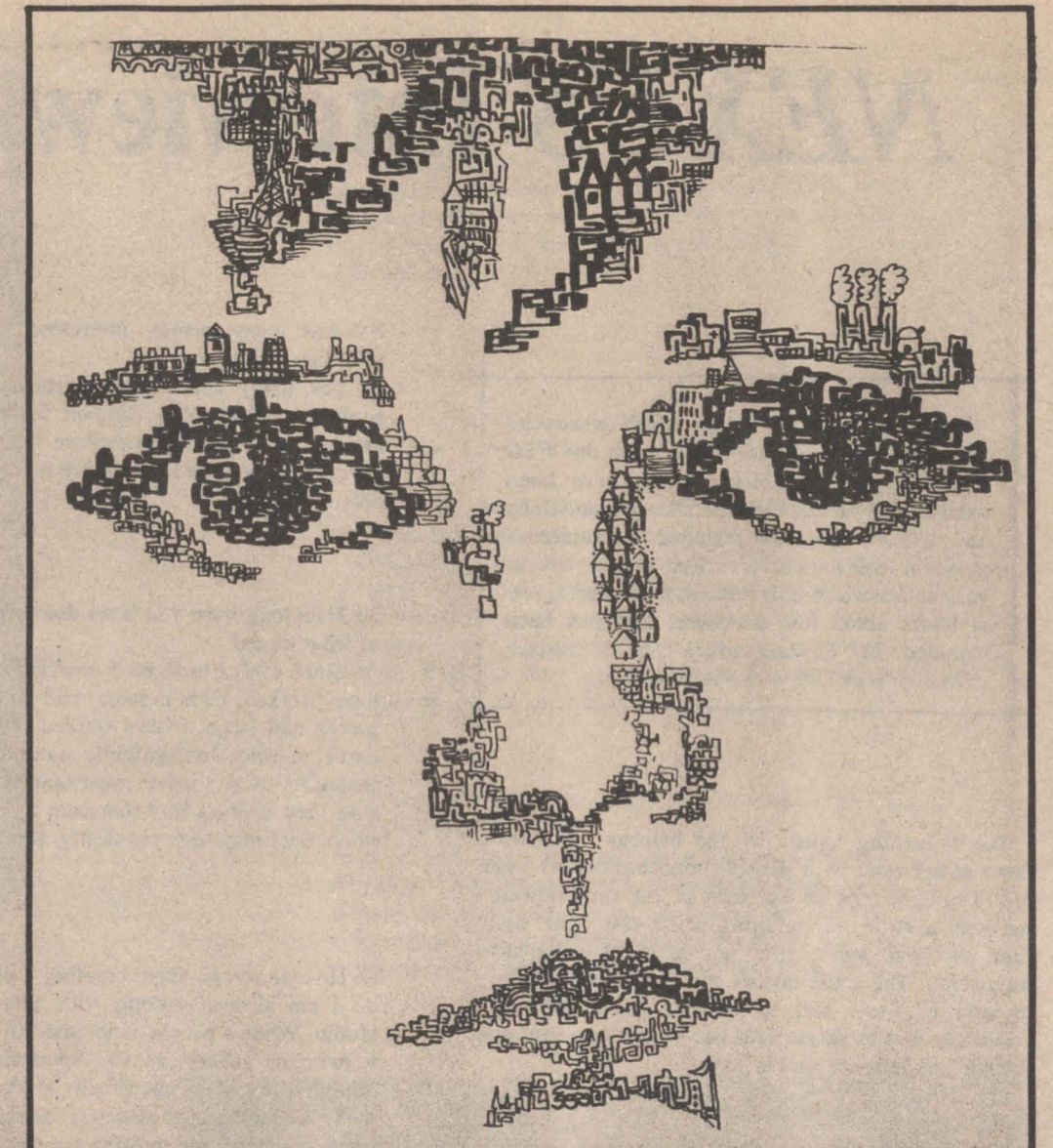
your poem, sir  
is all blond  
and i have read it twenty times  
(yes, do, give it to her)  
i hold it and my hands wrinkle  
moved to silent gesture  
while the rhythm of your cleated sole  
taps lightly in my brain  
anticipates the crunch  
of melting snow  
(yes, do)  
the silvered salmon spawn  
swallowed suns, child-blue eyes  
and spaces spin to light  
between your separate strands  
of hair.

by Jane E. Parenti

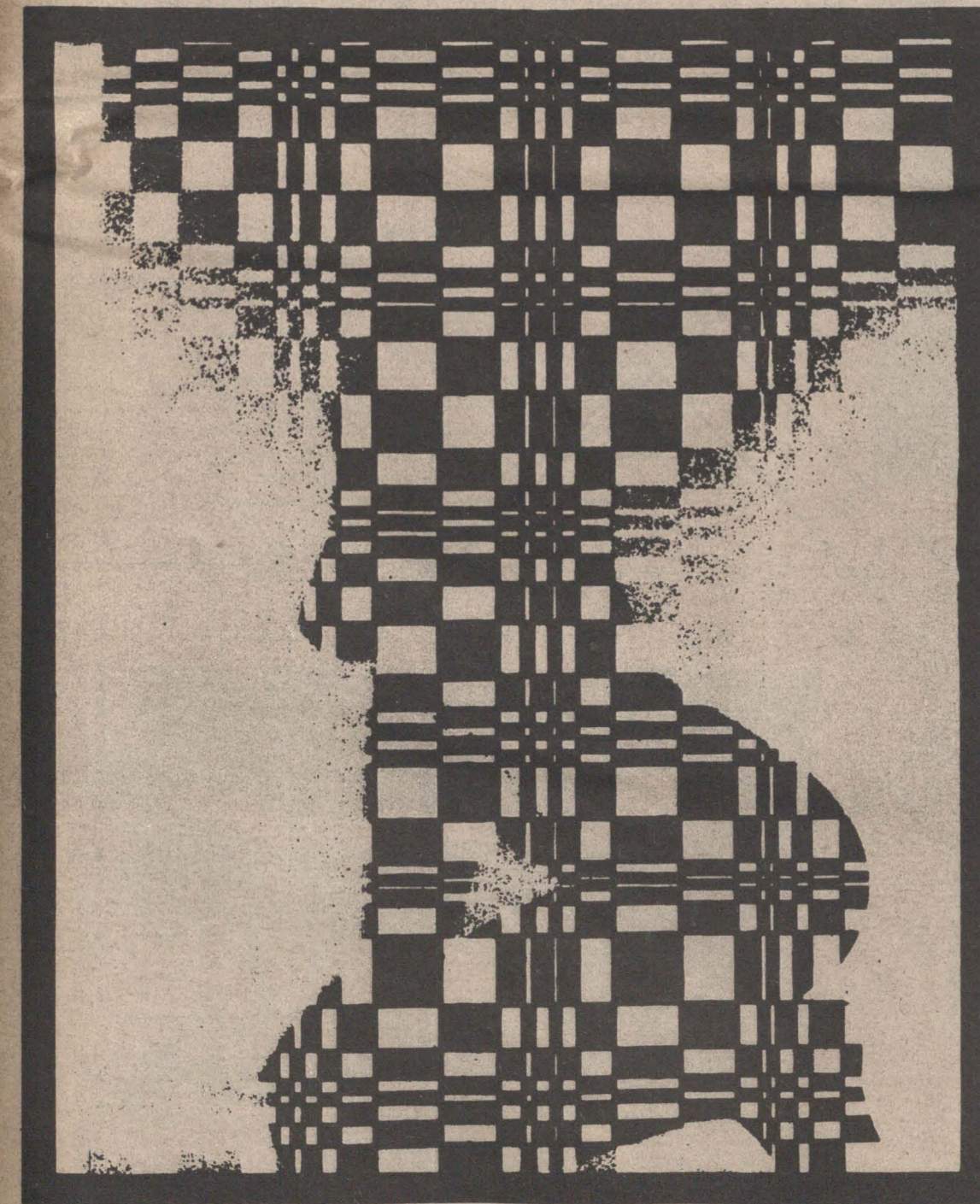
## Moments:1

We stared into empty space  
Hardly realizing  
The moment  
Every second  
ticking away  
tucking itself under the mattress  
hiding in its own warmth  
afraid to chance  
the meeting, the experience  
the new deal.

by Eduardo A. Garcia



artwork by Ed Cyvas



photograph by Bob Reck

## Untitled

I sometimes think  
the world has seen too many  
of my faces  
a little too much has been  
given out  
and now I need time  
to sit back  
and grow  
a bit mysterious

by Laura Grolla



# NEXUS Interviews Cecile Abish

Nexus interviewed Cecile Abish when she came down to install her sculpture in the WSU fine arts gallery. Abish's works have been exhibited in Japan, England, Europe, Australia and U.S.A., and are included in numerous museum collections. She has taught Art at various American universities, published several books about her sculpture, and has been included in *Contemporary Artists*. Abish currently lives and works in New York.

She is leaning lightly on the balcony rail gazing down at her work with pensive concentration as I join her. The light falls on her face as she turns towards me with a swift, encouraging smile--the same smile that she will wear after an hour of exhaustive inquisition. The smile invites one to talk and to listen; to ask, to learn and to express one's individual reactions; and to share with her in the beautiful and fulfilling experience that is Art.

Nexus: Could you tell us a little about environmental sculpture?

Abish: First of all, I do not think of myself as an environmental sculptor. *Environment* is too vast and too abstract a concept. My works, rather, are *Installations*, aiming to make the floor an act of entity in the sculpture.

N: Are many people interested in this type of sculpture today?

A: Yes, many contemporary artists are working with similar concepts--Vito Acconci for one. However, I believe I am the first to explore the potentials of the floor, activating the floor so that it becomes an integral part of the work.

N: How long have you been doing Installations? And of what kinds?

A: Since 1968 I have been working on Installations. I have worked both indoors and outdoors, on small pieces and large. I have worked with wood, plaster, earth, marbles and synthetic materials. I feel that the materials used are not important in themselves. The idea they express is. I therefore try to find materials which best manifest, physically, the idea.

N: How do you go about creating a piece of sculpture?

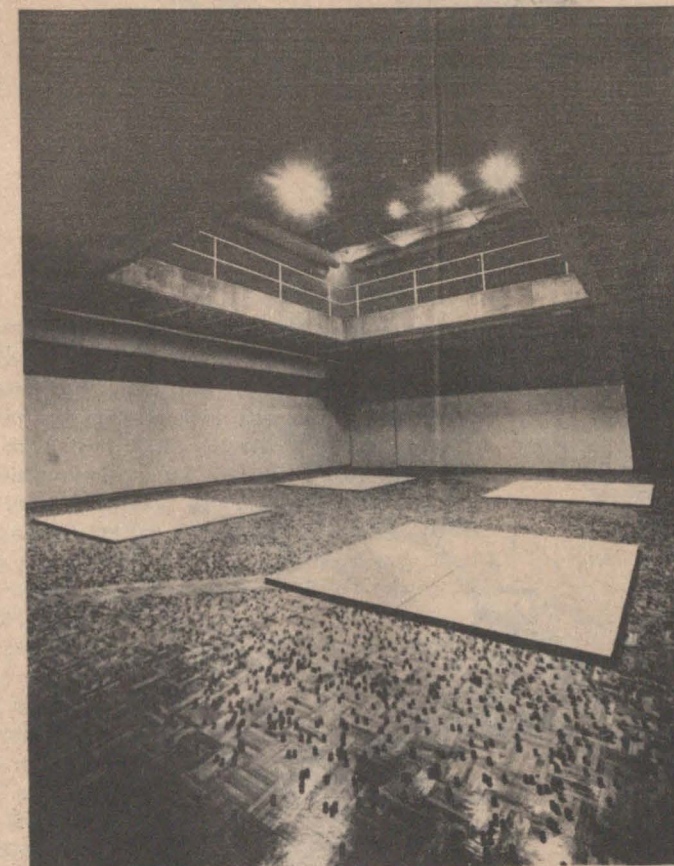
A: I am always working with sets of ideas in my studio. When a person sends me the measurements of a room or gallery, as Dr. Spurlock did, I think of applying my ideas specifically to the area at hand. I make many detailed sketches, seeing how the space can be best utilized to bring out the idea. All that you see below has been determined by the dimensions within which it stands. The measurement of the lip of the balcony determined the placing of the two parallel cuts in the panels. The placement of the clearances in the field of marbles is also carefully planned.

N: The use of marbles seems to be a rather novel idea. Why did you decide to use such a medium?

A: There are a number of reasons, actually. Previously, artists concentrated on building permanent works of monolithic grandeur. This was suited to their world where each thing had its fixed place. However, ours is a fluctuating society which does not revere fixed classifications, a society which is always searching and changing. To express its spirit, we need a new, non-monolithic medium. The move from *marble* to *marbles* reflects this need. Again, marbles have much potential. They help me to bring out certain ideas. They add a new yet penetrable surface to the original surface. This new surface is solid yet not rigid, embodying the idea of a fluid boundary. The many different colors also add a unique effect to the work. So many colors, put together, become neutral--but it is a translucent neutrality. Marbles have a potential for dispersal and fluctuation. A series of non-fixed points, they bring many levels into play in a piece of sculpture.

N: Talking of levels, have you ever worked with a multi-level gallery before?

A: No. This is the first time I have worked in such a space. I believe this gallery is quite unique in its construction. I find working here rather intriguing. There are so many possibilities to explore, so many perspectives from which to view a work. Different things emerge and disappear from different points in the gallery. We see the sculpture in a special way from the balcony now; walking down the stairs, you would



notice something new; downstairs, the intricate levelling would catch your eye. I am very proud to be building here--specially during International Women's Week.

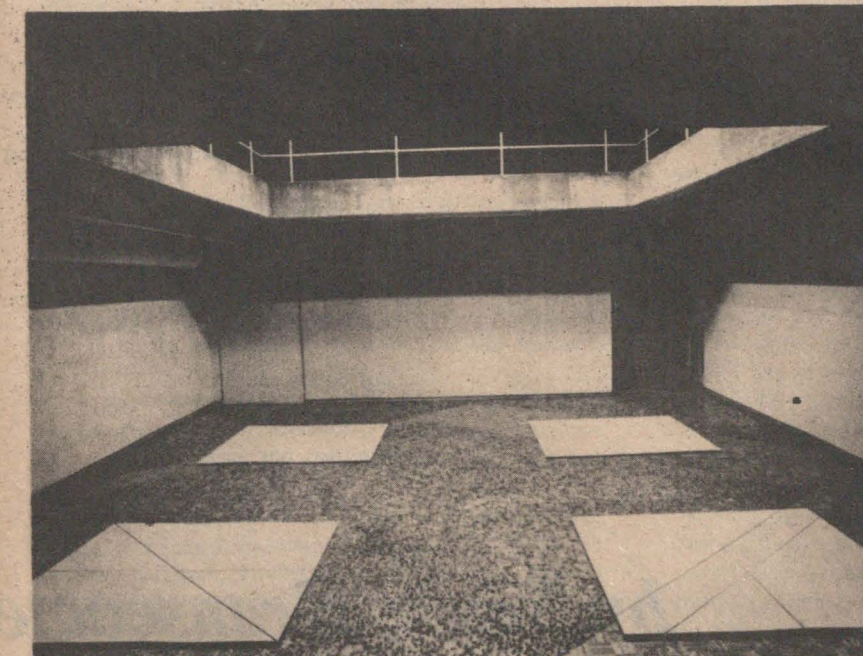
N: How long did this work take?

A: The actual installation took three weeks; a team of Wright State students helped me with it.

(At this moment we saw an onlooker touch and move one of the marbles).

N: Doesn't it bother you that your work might be destroyed so easily?

A: Not at all. My work is strong and yet very fragile--and I want it to be that way, because then it expresses the fragile demarcation between existence and non-existence. Also, it is misleading to think of impermanence in terms of impermanent materials. At the end of March, my work will be packed up and sent to me. But that does not mean it is destroyed. I still have my drawings and, more important, my ideas. I can reconstruct it whenever I want to. This is true permanence. I would not want it any other way. I would not want my work to stay here forever, occupying this space and preventing other artists from the chance of exhibiting their works.



N: Do your works have any recurring motifs?

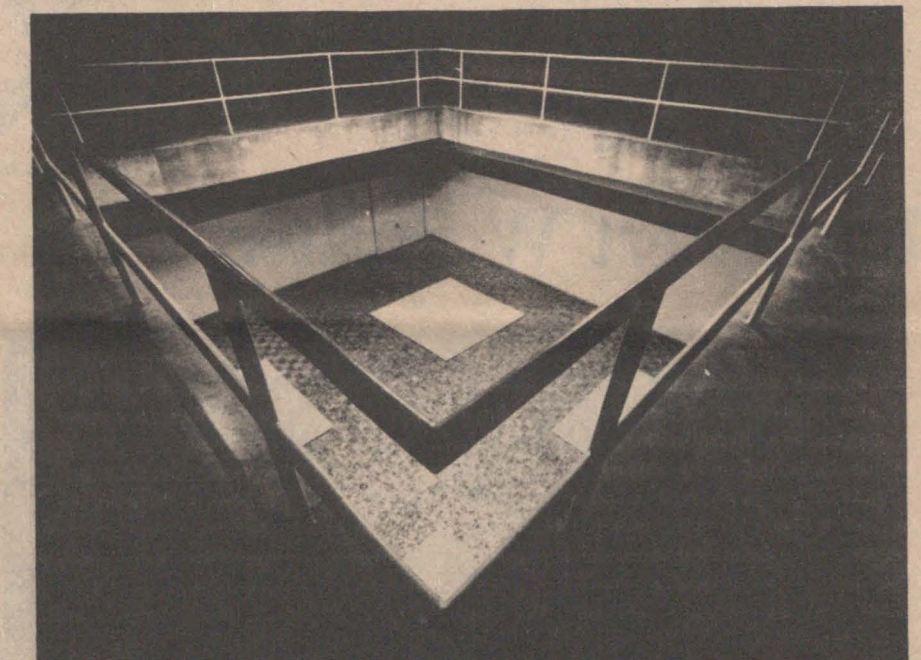
A: I am concerned with the themes of interlocking and separation, fragmentation and removal. They are unconsciously present in most of my works. Always, my works are a statement about surface and its perception.

N: Are you at all concerned with the reactions of the public--the people who see and even judge your sculpture?

A: Yes, I am much concerned with the public. Artists doing Installations are in a strange position. We are building in places belonging to others. We use "public property" and our works become "public property." We therefore have a great responsibility. Every structure has a philosophy behind it--that of power, maybe. It is our duty to bring this out through our sculptures and make the public aware of it.

N: When you teach Art, what do you emphasize to your students?

A: One has to be very careful when working with students. They are so young, so busy adjusting to a new world and facing new intellectual phenomena. Often they are bewildered by the richness of the experiences confronting them. They have to learn to



ask the right questions--to know what to look for. This is what I try to teach them.

I try to show them the seriousness of being an artist. I teach them to explore a subject fully and to utilize time in the best ways. I expose them to different systems and ideas while encouraging them to develop their own style. Artists should be aware of the close connection between all branches of culture. I want my students to be sensitive to philosophy, contemporary music, poetry...They need all this to know how things come apart and how they are put together. Art is not made from the heart alone. Art synthesizes Idea, Experience, Knowledge and Originality into a beautiful whole--and I want my students to realize this.

"...The floor has become part of the sculpture. In this respect, building sculpture is also a political act of taking possession of a surface...and of using suface to give shape to the sculpture. The sculpture is, in a sense, something that the surface's owner can only accept after relinquishing the word 'floor.' Everywhere surfaces await the coming of sculpture...the coming of the new vision, as floors will drop away, and the boundary lines will be redrawn."

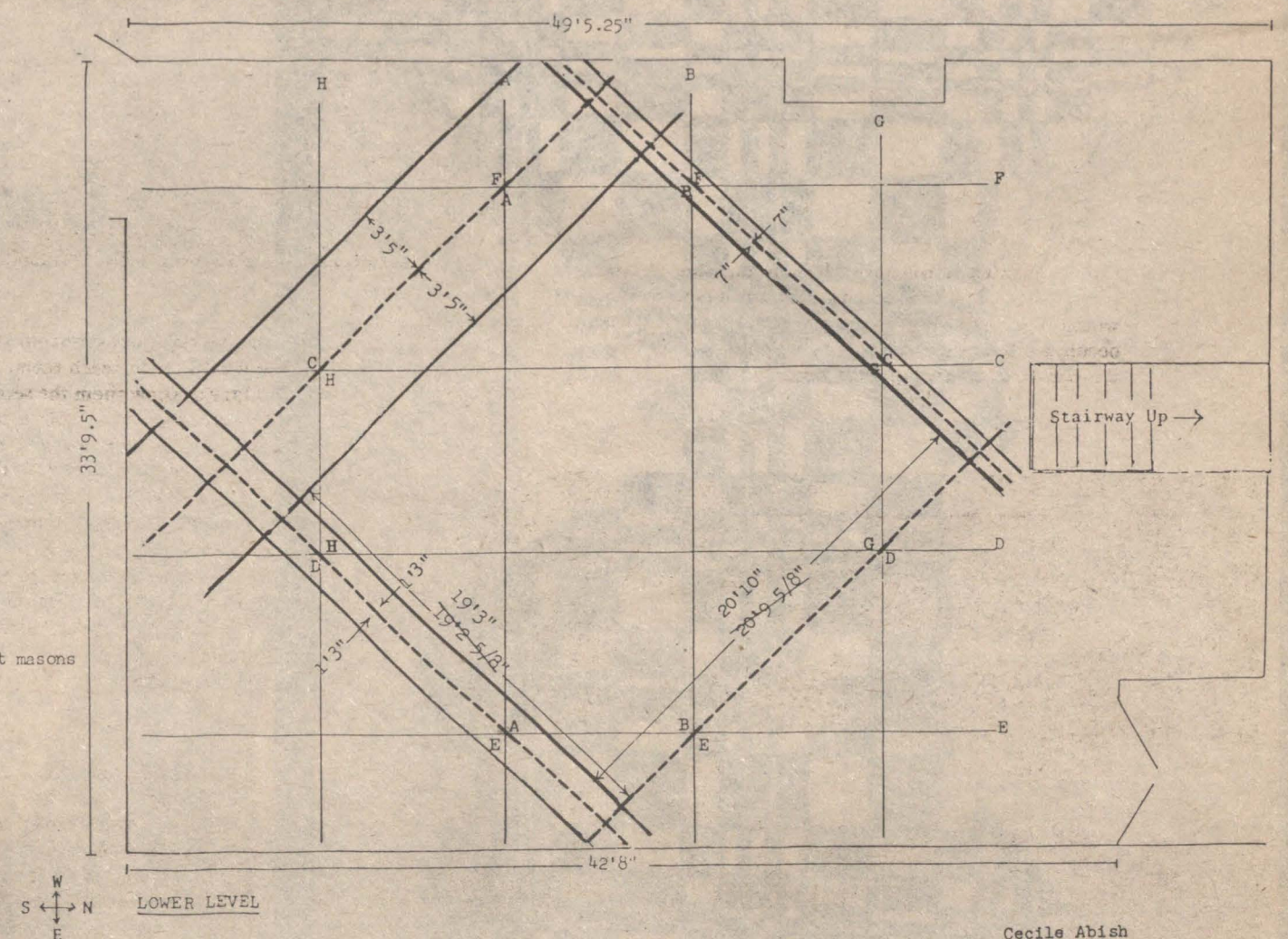
WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

5. Measure and mark off 1" on both sides of B/F and C/G line - Northwest axis.

Measure and mark off 3'5" on both sides of A/F and C/H line - Southwest axis.

Measure and mark off 1'3" on both sides of D/H and A/E line - Southeast axis.

With these points as guides lay out masone cord parallel to center line.

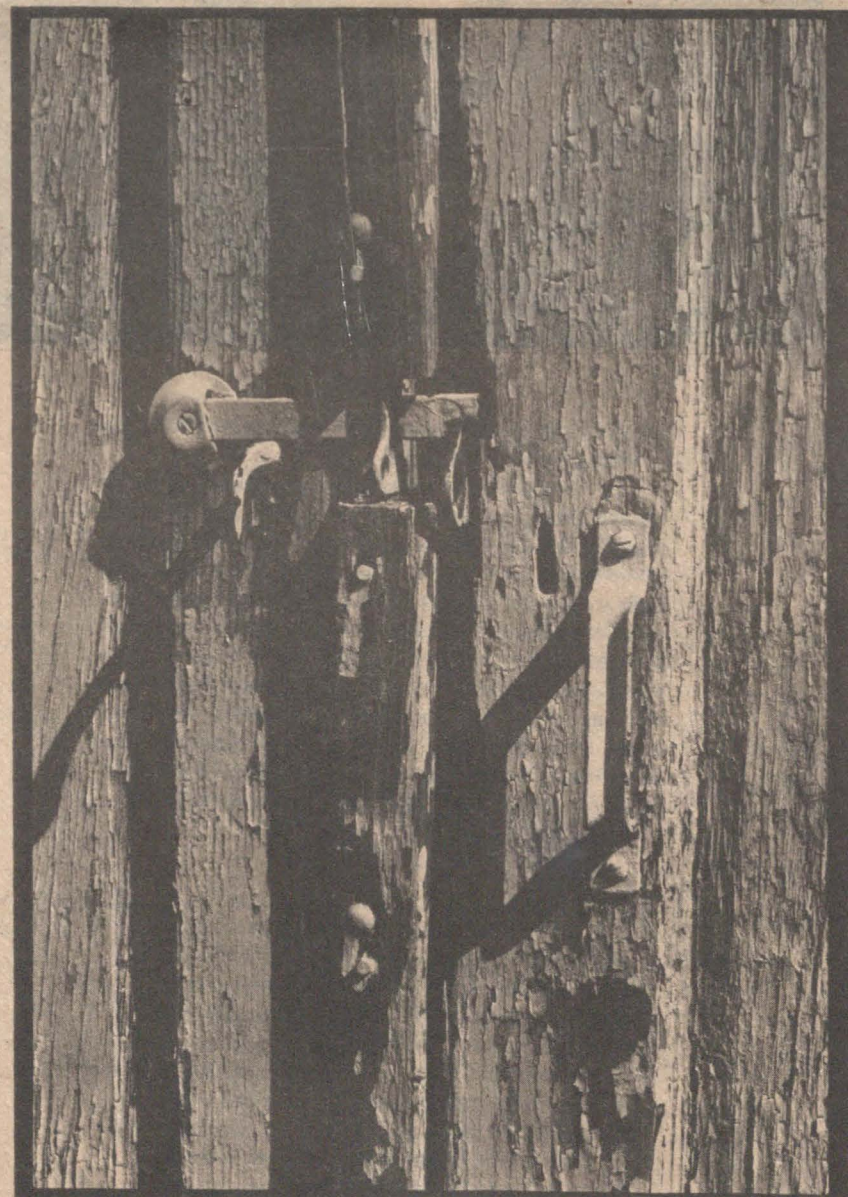




# The Patched Earth

It sprawls dying almost  
dead  
a quilted royal  
flag and twelve shots  
to the wind  
seen only by the orb'd  
eye of sun and quiet  
clouds drifting  
deftly  
incision'd  
against eternal  
tapestry of indigo  
but beneath asserted  
sod and  
granite  
pews  
probing worms feel its  
faint  
apathetic  
ragged pulse.

by Robert W. Prater



photograph by John Whitford



## Untitled

Resolutely, our farmhouse remains  
as it did in many generations  
of earlier time

This morning it is blanketed  
in a misty mucus haven of cool sweat  
The sweat we bore yesterday.  
It covers the rolling hills  
that protect us  
and intently clothes the wheat crops  
that keep us alive.  
Our eyes are  
Early-morning itchy  
For we are hardworking folk  
and our slumber never exceeds dawn.  
A long, lazy Sunday is to be endured  
One filled with  
cow-milking  
stone-faced God-worshipping  
and pickle canning  
They say our life is simple  
But only sin is dappled with ease.

by Susan Branscome

# Back From The Void

by Dana Strub

Jennifer woke up angry and confused. It was the same feeling she'd had thirty years before as a small child when, one night, she'd gone to bed, closed her eyes and then re-opened them to find herself surrounded, not by darkness, but sunshine. That time she'd been certain that the night could not have passed her unawares, and she'd decided that a gremlin had stolen the night. This time, Jennifer had no easy explanation. She felt that time had passed without her knowledge or consent, but how much time she couldn't guess.

The pale green walls, the institutional furniture, gave no clue. Her body told her only that she was neither sick nor hurt. She tried to reach back into the void, and for a moment, her mind's fingers touched nothing; then painful memories rushed back.

"Bill left me," she said out loud. The sound of the words frightened her, but she could not stop the memories. Melinda had been Bill's first love, fifteen years before. She'd married a Mormon, moved to Utah, and disappeared from the face of the earth. Bill used to joke about how, if she ever showed up on his doorstep, he'd run off with her. During the twelve years she'd known and loved Bill, Jennifer had never once taken him seriously. And then Melinda came back, and Bill was gone.

"I must have gone bonkers," Jennifer whispered. A short, swarthy man came into the room.

"How long have I been here, Doc? and where's here?"

The dark eyebrows went up. "Good morning, Mrs. Stone, and how are you today?"

"Is this Stillwater? How long have I been here?"

"This is Stillwater Health Center, and since introductions seem necessary, I'm Doctor Rangarajan. Just call me Raj, everyone does."

"Fine, Raj, now just tell me how long I've been here."

"First, you tell me what you remember."

"My old man split, and I must have gone bananas."

"Tell me about it. Take your time. Stop if it becomes painful."

"What's to tell? You've probably got it all down on your little chart somewhere; patient number 345 suffering from severe trauma following loss of delusions of grandeur. I thought I was pretty hot stuff—over thirty, still pretty foxy, married to the same man for ten years. That's a lot more than most of my friends could say."

"Tell me about the day your husband left you, the day Bill 'split.'"

"What's to tell? Melinda showed up on our doorstep and that was that. All those years, out the door."

"Okay, tell me about those years. How did you meet, and how soon after did you marry?"

"The marriage date is probably in your file somewhere."

"I hate reading files. I'd much rather talk to a pretty lady who obviously doesn't remember ever having talked to me."

"Okay. Okay. We met April 14, 1966, on a blind date. Bill had been married the previous January to a gal he'd been dating for several years. She was pregnant with someone else's kid, but Bill had wanted it to work out anyway. It hadn't and one of Bill's buddies figured he was about to go off the deep end."

"Go off the deep end, how ironic. He didn't and I did."

"So anyway, his buddy's girl friend set up this blind date, and we hit it off. It was funny. I was the one who was worried that coming off the rebound, he might fall for me. Instead, I fell for him!"

"He didn't make fun of the way I talked, Doc, er, Raj. I wasn't much to look at as a teenager, but I did do well in school. I read a lot, and my vocabulary included a lot of words of more than three letters. I'd had guys take me out on dates, make a pass, and when I didn't get down to it hot and heavy, they'd

drop me. They weren't interested in anyone who talked like a schoolteacher."

"But Bill was different?"

"Yeah. He didn't exactly talk like an English teacher, but he was a voracious reader, and he wasn't ashamed to admit it."

"So what happened next?"

"Well, we started writing. He was military at the time, stationed in Illinois. I was in Detroit. I asked him if I could write to him, and pretty soon he was hitching up every weekend."

"Was there any of this 'hot and heavy stuff'?"

"Not right away. In fact, we talked about sleeping together for months before we ever got around to it. I finally got a place of my own, and then we started."

"Bill got transferred to Wright Patt, and I moved to Dayton. Bill was over every day after work, and stayed every weekend, and soon he just moved in."

"And then you got married?"

"Not for a year. His first marriage was finally legally annulled. We got married April 30, 1968; two years, two weeks, and two days after we'd met."

"And were you happy?"

"Ecstatic. Everyone in the church heard my vows. I wanted the whole world to know I loved Bill, and was proud to be marrying him."

"And the years that followed, were they happy?"

"Mostly. We had the usual young-marrieds' problems—most of them to do with money, or the lack thereof."

"And were you faithful to one another?"

"Not in the usual sense of the word. I was the first to be 'unfaithful,' before we were even married. Bill got transferred to Illinois shortly before the wedding. I'd been a virgin when I met Bill, and one night I got panicky over the idea of never sleeping with anyone but Bill, ever. At the time I just couldn't picture myself ever sleeping with anyone else after I was married, so I went to bed with one of his buddies."

"Did you tell Bill?"

"Sure. I knew he'd slept with others before me. He'd told me I was his first virgin."

"And how did he take it?"

"He took it fine. Said it was probably good for me. It was the other fellow who couldn't handle it."

"And after you were married?"

"Me first, again, or at least I thought so. I was in D.C. for a week, training for a new job, and I had more propositions that week than I'd had in my whole life. The last night there was a party. I got the hornies and took this dude to bed."

"And how did you feel afterwards?"

"Bill wired flowers the next day, and I went home vowing I'd make it up to him."

"Did you tell him about it?"

"Not till two years later when Bill came home one morning at 7 a.m., tail between his legs, saying he'd done something stupid. 'Thank God that's over with,' I told him, 'now I can tell you about my indiscretion.'"

"So you don't equate happiness in marriage with total fidelity."

"No, in fact I used to tell Bill I didn't care if he called to tell me he was spending the night with his girlfriend, just so he didn't make me sit up all night wondering if he was dead in a ditch somewhere."

"Did he ever do that, call you?"

"He called the night before he came home at 7, but he hadn't said he was with a girl."

"But he had been?"

"He'd been having an affair, a full-fledged affair."

"You hadn't suspected?"

"Hell, he's a musician. I don't go with him to every gig, and besides, as I told him that morning, I never expected complete fidelity; but I did expect complete honesty. I was more pissed about his lying than about the affair. He said he hadn't thought I was strong enough to handle it."

"But you were."

"And the next time he had an affair I knew about it while it was going on. I'd told Bill I thought I deserved the right to decide for myself to stay or split, and we weathered that second affair too."

"How long ago was the second affair?"

"Two, three months ago—at least, two or three months before Melinda showed up, how ever long ago that was. You still haven't told me how long I've been here, Raj."

"Tell me about the day Melinda 'showed up on your doorstep.'"

"What's to tell? She showed, and Bill split."

"What day of the week was it?"

"It was Saturday. We got up late, like we usually do after Bill has played the night before. Bill fixed omelettes for breakfast, and after our second cup of coffee we went back to bed for dessert."

"What happened then?"

"We had a bath, and Bill went to the K-Mart for oil. The car was due for a change."

"And what did you do?"

"I was changing the bed and straightening up when there was a knock on the door."

"Had you heard a car drive up?"

"I don't remember."

"Who was at the door?"

"Melinda."

"How did you know who it was?"

"I'd seen a picture of Bill and her taken at a high school dance."

"Hadden't she aged any? Did she identify herself?"

"It was Melinda. She'd come to take Bill away."

"What was she wearing?"

"A spaghetti-strapped ballerina length dress, and Bill was in a tux."

"You mean in the picture. What was she wearing that Saturday?"

"It was Melinda. She'd come to take Bill away."

"Did she say anything? Did she tell you who she was, or why she was there, or how she'd gotten your address?"

"It was Melinda. Come to take Bill away."

"Did she come in? Did Bill come back while she was there?"

"It was Melinda. Come to take Bill away."

Jennifer was screaming.

"Easy, Jennifer, easy." Dr. Rangarajan patted her on the shoulder. "We'll talk more tomorrow."

He left her, her body shaking, her eyes glued to the doorway.

Out in the hall he ran into Beth Christenson, one of the graduate assistants doing internship.

"How's Jennifer today, Raj?"

"Lucid for the first time, Beth. She can remember everything up to the time the cop showed up on her doorstep to tell her Bill Stone was dead, but she still insists that this Melinda came and took him away. She'd rather think of him as with another woman than dead, even though she knows he isn't coming back."

"How did Bill Stone die, Raj?"

"Automobile accident."

"Anyone with him in the car?"

"No."

"Could this Melinda have showed up earlier, or called? Can we be certain that Bill Stone wasn't on his way to meet this mysterious lady out of his past? Jennifer seems so sure her husband left for this Melinda."

"I got one of the fellows over at Missing Persons to check it out shortly after Jennifer was admitted. I thought maybe I could get this Melinda to come see Jennifer, let Jennifer see for herself that Melinda was not the person who appeared on her doorstep. I thought it might shake her out of it."

"What happened? No luck? Did this Melinda drop off the end of the world?"

"No, Melinda Adams Gore died in Salt Lake City in 1972."



# Death Upstairs

## by Ron Griffiths

Harley Brown, his wife Alice, and their grown daughter Jennifer, lived on an eighty acre farm just down the road from my Dad's farm. Harley was a small slim man with a red complexion and yellowish white hair. His complexion was the kind of red that certain fair-complexioned people get after they have been exposed to the wind and the sun of the seasons in Ohio.

We were neighbors, and even though we were acquainted with the Browns, we were not close friends. Mom would occasionally drive over and pick up Alice and Jennifer, and they would go into Greenville and shop and talk and catch up on all the country gossip. There was a large age difference between our families as Harley and Alice were in their seventies and Jennifer, who had never married because Alice had always given her suitors such a rough time, was in her forties. When Jennifer had been young, young men had come to court her, but that had stopped a good many years before we knew them.

I guess, because Harley and Alice had gotten married and started their life together on their farm during the depression years of the late twenties and early thirties, they were very close with their money. Alice saved string and glass jars, bread wrappers and brown bags, to be used again and again. Whenever Jennifer would want to drive into nearby Greenville, she had to ask her mother for a nickel for the parking meter. For this reason, too, the Browns did not have electrically pumped water in their house or an inside toilet. When Mother took a cake over for Harley and Alice's fiftieth wedding anniversary, I remember seeing

the dark old cast iron pump, which they used to pump water, sticking up out of the kitchen sink.

As sometimes happens with older men, Harley had trouble with what he called his "private" region. It was probably his prostate because he had to go to the bathroom more frequently than he had had to when he was younger. For that reason, he kept an old cast iron bucket upstairs in his bedroom, so that he would not have to go downstairs and outside at night.

Early one morning before dawn, Harley got out of bed and as he was going through the doorway of his room to the stairway, his foot accidentally hit the black iron bucket which caused him to trip and fall. As he fell, his right hand hit the black bucket just where the handle is fastened onto the body of the bucket, leaving a deep gash between his second and third fingers. He wasn't really hurt other than his hand, but he was a little shook up from the fall. Jennifer cleaned and dressed his hand and Harley didn't give the accident any more thought, except for some soreness that was in his back, until a few days later when his neck got stiff and then his jaws got stiff and he couldn't keep them open and he went to the doctor and the doctor told him he had tetanus.

Of course I didn't know anything about what happened to Harley until it came out in the Greenville Daily Advocate. Harley had died and our family, my mother and father and brother and two sisters, went up to the funeral home. Harley didn't look red like he did before, but more like an ivory statue that red dust had been feathered on.

Later that night, when I was lying in bed upstairs in the big double bed I shared with my brother, Rocky, I

couldn't get the picture of Harley lying there in his bronze casket with the light blue nylon-like liner out of my mind. It was hot in our upstairs bedroom and I knew that it was useless for me to try to sleep so I didn't even try but just lay there in the hot night. Everyone else was asleep and the house was quiet. The usual sounds of night like the cows bawling out in the fields and our dog, Cookie, barking at other dogs, could not be heard. I just stayed there in bed lying on my back waiting for morning to come and then after a while morning came and I got up feeling as if I had worked very hard all night. Dad was up at dawn as usual and as soon as I heard him, I got up and went downstairs. He would wonder why I was up so early because he usually had to call us at least a couple of times, but in the still quiet morning he would not ask and I would not say anything and we would eat and go out and milk the cows. It was good to go out and be with the cows. The smell of them and their sleepy getting-awake movements made me feel more like I used to feel.

I had trouble in the night for several nights. One night I got up and went down to my parent's bedroom. I felt like I had to talk to someone. I called to my mother who was a very light sleeper.

"What's wrong," she said.

"I'm having trouble sleeping," I said and as I said that I knew that I could not put into words what was bothering me and even if I did no one would understand. After a brief silence I went back upstairs and got back into bed and after a few days things got better and pretty soon it passed and Dad had to call me again in the morning.



photograph by Bob Reck

# Again

It was an ignorant love at best--

standing in line at the bank for hours,

wondering when to withdraw,

guarding your skin from the final touch

vaulted in webs of distrust.

I can never get back to that earlier faith.

There are no apparitions

to startle my skin

like the hair on your chest;

no Eucharistic rite repairs

the virgin's sacrifice.

Still, the dream recurs,

filling our hands with counterfeit coins

that spill into yellow-streaked mounds,

I fling my body, golden,

into the shining discs.

Laughing,

we pan the exhausted streams

for buried treasure

again.

by Jane E. Parenti

# Love Poem

Gums aching with the sting of  
the needles, the novocaine,  
I am aware that I love you selfishly,  
Knowing if I were toothless tomorrow,  
Hiding an old woman's face  
in the crook of your arm,  
You would bring me applesauce  
and daisies, just the same,  
Praising my meatballs,  
Writing my name with eager strokes,  
in fluid gray lines,  
Healing my puckering mouth  
with your pen  
Shaping a charcoal smile,  
Melting my shame in a shower  
of Diebenkorn blues  
Rinsing my hollows with rain.

by Jane E. Parenti



photograph by Bob Reck



